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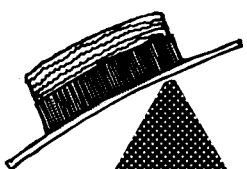

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Marxism Today

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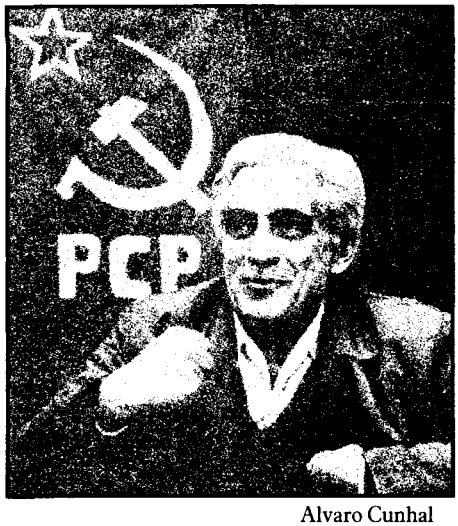
THE PORTUGUESE ELECTIONS

At first sight, the Portuguese general election, held on December 2nd, might seem part of a general swing to the right in Western Europe. It gave the right-wing parties who formed the self-styled 'Democratic Alliance' (AD) 128 seats in the Portuguese parliament — a majority of six over the combined forces of the Socialist Party (74 seats), the Communist Party (44), its electoral ally the Portuguese Democratic Movement (3), and the lone representative of the ultra-left Popular Democratic Union.

On closer examination, however, the Right's victory is less than convincing. True, the AD's percentage of the vote was 45% as opposed to the 40.4% won by its component parties the PPD (Popular Democratic Party) the CDS (Social and Democratic Centre) and the miniscule PPM (Popular Monarchist Party) in the 1976 elections. But an even sharper increase was registered in the Communist vote. The PCP had secured 14.7% of the vote in 1976: in December APU (the 'People United Alliance' — an electoral coalition of the PCP and MDP in which the latter is very much the junior partner) won 19%.

The great loser was the Socialist Party which slumped from 34.9% to 27.4%, losing votes heavily on both left and right.

Nevertheless, despite this sharp decline in the PS vote, more people voted for the Left than for the Right. APU plus the PS plus various ultra-left slates accumulated slightly more than 50% of the votes. It was the Hondt system of proportional representation that robbed the Left of victory. This system penalises small parties (so that, except in Lisbon, all the ultra-left votes went up in smoke), and ensures that where votes are concentrated on a bloc of parties such as the AD more seats will be won than if the same votes were dispersed among the various elements of that bloc standing separately. The use of this system in Portugal does raise the question of a Communist-Socialist electoral alliance fairly sharply.



Alvaro Cunhal

The Socialist Party's defeat was the predictable result of its miserable period in government from 1976 to 1978, of its subsequent failure to form an effective opposition to the reactionary administration of Carlos Mota Pinto in the first half of 1979, and finally of its refusal to put a clear policy before the electors.

In office, the Socialist Party, despite the radicalism of its programme, carried out the dictates of the International Monetary Fund, building up colossal deficits on the trade and payments balances, and dissipating Portugal's substantial gold reserves. Like many another spineless social-democratic governments before it, Mario Soares' administration imposed restrictions on wages while doing virtually nothing to control the rate of inflation. It ruled first as a minority government, in tacit agreement with the Right, then in open coalition with the CDS, a party full of former functionaries of the defunct fascist regime. In July 1978 the right decided that it had no more use for the Socialist Party, and Mario Soares was discarded like a piece of spent chewing gum. The CDS broke off the coalition, President Ramalho Eanes started appointing allegedly 'independent', 'non-party' (but in fact reactionary) governments, and the PS found itself out in the cold.

But although out of office, the PS could still bring down any right-wing government provided it acted in concert with the Communist Party in Parliament. Instead the PS chose to allow the grossly reactionary government of Mota Pinto to survive. Twice the PS parliamentary group abstained — on a motion of no confidence and on the budget — when it could have removed the government. Thus seven months of arbitrary violence was imposed on the Portuguese people, particularly in the rural south where repeatedly force was used to eject workers from the collective farms of the Alentejo and hand them back to the previous landowners, before the PS could bring itself to table its own motion of censure, and Mota Pinto resigned.

In government the Socialist Party had laid the basis for counter-revolution. It had passed laws which threatened to destroy the agrarian reform, to undermine the nationalised sector, and to provide vast compensation to expropriated latifundists and monopolists. Even in opposition the PS attempted to carry on this 'legislative counter-

	APU		PS		AD	
	%	deputies elected	%	deputies	%	deputies
The South						
Beja	50.7	3	21.9	1	19	1
Evora	48.8	3	16.9	1	26.9	1
Setubal	46.9	9	21.3	4	22.3	4
Portalegre	29.3	1	19.7	1	32	2
Lisbon	26.1	16	25.8	15	39.9	24
Santarem	21.7	3	27.3	3	41	6
Faro	20.2	2	33.9	3	34.5	4
The North						
Aveiro	7.9	1	28.4	5	56.6	9
Braga	10.0	1	30.2	5	51.8	9
Braganca	5.8	–	22.1	1	60.5	3
Castelo Branco	12.4	–	27.6	2	49.8	4
Coimbra	11.2	1	35.1	5	44.7	6
Guarda	5.4	–	26.2	1	60.3	4
Leiria	10.8	1	23.1	3	56.1	7
Oporto	14.5	6	34.8	14	44.4	18
Viana do Castelo	9.8	–	24.7	2	54.7	4
Vila Real	6.1	–	24.8	2	57.6	4
Viseu	5.5	–	21.2	2	64.3	8
The Islands						
Azores	3.1	–	29.8	2	59.2	3
Madeira	3.0	–	17.2	1	68.7	4

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revolution' by introducing a bill regulating the internal life of trade unions, designed to shatter the power of Portugal's trade union confederation, the CGTP-Intersindical.

When it came to the elections the PS refused to given any guarantees as to what its deputies would do once elected. The PS would 'rule alone', claimed Soares. Since it wasn't going to get 50% of the seats, this was clearly absurd. The Portuguese people weren't interested in marvellous promises: what they wanted to know, declared PCP General Secretary Alvaro Cunhal, was quite simple — who did the PS intend to ally with after the election? Would it vote with the AD in the Assembly, or with the Communists? Everybody knew what a vote for APU or a vote for the AD meant: but what was a vote for the PS? Was it a vote for the Left or for the Right?

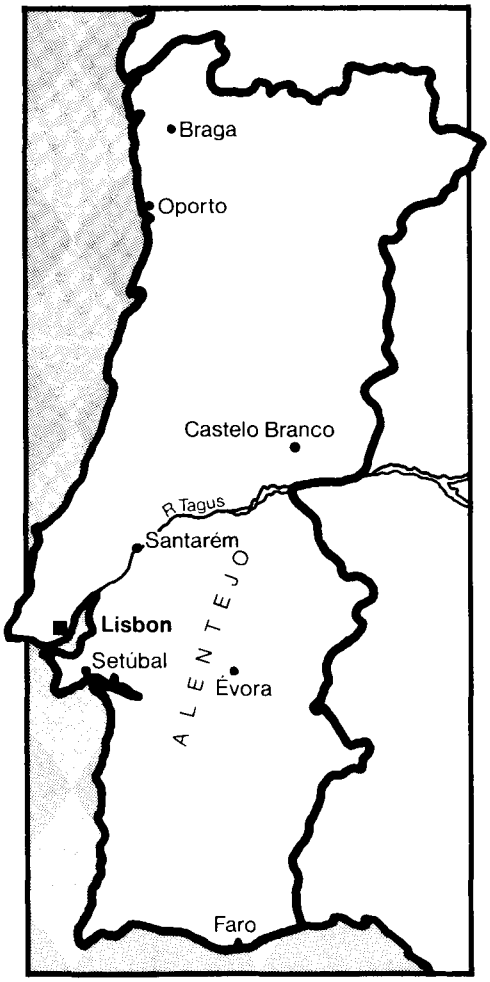
This was an effective campaigning point, though somewhat disingenuous, since Mario Saores' personal antipathy towards the PCP was well-known, as was the fact that any Socialist-Communist alliance would immediately lead the German SPD to cut off its subsidies to Soares.

The election once again pointed to the deep regional differences in Portugal. North of a line from Lisbon through Santarem to Castelo Branco the Right holds a clear majority. South of that line the Left holds an equally clear majority. (The islands of Madeira and the Azores are also right-wing dominated). The following table of results grouping the electoral districts geographically illustrates this:

APU's strength lies in the most heavily industrialised parts of the country — Lisbon and Setubal districts — and in the Agrarian Reform zone (which covers Beja, Evora, Portalegre, Setubal and parts of Santarem). The plains of the Alentejo and Ribatejo with their great estates, now run as collective farms, provide a striking contrast to agriculture in the much hillier terrain of the north and centre of the country, where the minifundium is dominant, where indvidual farmers (either proprietors or tenants) scratch out a living on tiny plots of land. Northern villages will frequently be dominated by a 'cacique': the word has no exact English equivalent, but he (or sometimes she) will often be the major landowner or businessman in the district, may have a substantial economic hold over the farmers, and exercises, in tandem with the Catholic Church, effective political control over the area.

However, the Left has made headway in the north. APU's vote in the northern districts generally doubled that achieved by the PCP in 1976. The election of a Communist deputy in Braga was particularly satisfying. This district was one of the worst hit by right-wing mob violence in 1975. In the centre of the city of Braga itself the Archbishop had incited a fanatical crowd to burn down the PCP offices, and similar scenes had occurred in smaller towns. Now the Left is securely established here, and clerical intimidation no longer has its desired result.

From O Diario, *Lisbon*



Local elections were held a fortnight later on December 16. On a rather lower poll the right wing pushed up its percentage of the vote to 47%. APU won 20.9% while the PS remained more or less static at 27%. The party with the largest share of the vote in a council wins the mayorship. APU now has 50 mayors (previously its total was 37); the PS has slumped from 115 to 57; while the right wing has risen from 152 to 196. (This is not quite as impressive as it seems since councils vary enormously in size).

The Right can glory in capturing Lisbon and Oporto councils from the Socialist Party — but other factors must be worrying it. For the Right's electoral alliance tended to break down locally. In more than half the municipalities the AD ceased to function and its separate parties ran their own slates. Animosity between rival caciques clearly wrecked the prospects for right-wing unity at a local level. This mutual suspicion may yet seep upwards and cause serious problems for any right-wing government.

As expected, APU consolidated its position in the Agrarian Reform zone and in the Lisbon and Setubal industrial belts. Indeed in Setubal district APU won all of the 13 councils: APU votes of 66% and 62% in the working class townships of Moita and Barreiro on the south bank of the Tagus, or of 62% and 65% in the rural councils of Alcacer do Sal and Grandola, are eloquent testimony to communist hegemony in this part of the country. Encouraging advances were also registered in the north, with many more APU councillors being elected.

Taken together, the two December elections are little short of catastrophic for the Socialist Party, and the PS intends to hold a major inquest. The writing is clearly on the wall: within a couple of years the PS could easily be overtaken by the PCP as the largest force on the Left, not only in terms of membership (the PCP is already in an unshakeable position here with its 180,000 members), but also electorally. The situation is particularly perilous in that many PS votes are purely tactical in purpose: in the north the PS votes tend to be anti-fascist, in the south they tend to be anti-communist. The northern PS vote was undoubtedly

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influenced by Soares' claim that there was no chance of electing Communist deputies in these parts of the country. But the excellent showing by APU in the north has shattered this argument: apart from the islands, there is not a single district in Portugal where the election of at least one Communist deputy next time round could be considered as wildly improbable.

Thus the Portuguese Socialist Party must fear that it is sliding towards the same, very junior, position on the political scene as that occupied by the Italian socialists. But this fear has not provoked any change of direction at leadership level. Immediately after the general election, the PCP offered joint talks with the PS to discuss ways of combating the right: this was immediately rejected by the PS Secretariat.

The right wing now has eight months to enjoy its tenuous victory. Under the terms of the Constitution fresh elections must be held in 1980 in order to elect a legislature that will be competent to revise the Constitution if it so desires. The December elections were unforeseen and were only held because there was no other way of solving the governmental crisis that followed Mota Pinto's resignation. In this eight months there can be little doubt that the right wing will try to dismantle all the gains made by the working class as a result of the revolution. In particular, the Agrarian Reform will once again come under attack, and further state violence can be expected in the fields of the Alentejo. But the popular movement is far from cowed, and forms a formidable obstacle to the plans of the AD.

THE EEC AND RECESSION

The recent rejection of the EEC budget by the European Assembly is only one example of increasing dislocation in the Common Market's institutions. Although agreement between the Brussels Commission and the Strasbourg Assembly can probably be patched together in time for next summer's season of butter-mountain building, the Commissioners must be particularly pained that the directly elected Assembly — designed to throw a veil of democratic respectability over their administration — has begun by an assault on the sacred Common Agricultural Policy.

It is increasingly apparent that the structure of the EEC, which seemed so effective during the 'super-growth' of the fifties and early sixties, is completely unequipped to respond to the stagnation and crises of the seventies and eighties. The 'neo-liberal' philosophy of unfettered competition in industrial markets suited the needs of big business while there was plenty of scope for expansion; in a period of massive over-production this is no longer the case. The main exception to the competitive dogma, protection and subsidy for high cost agriculture on the continent, made for stability and could be afforded with relative ease while the industrial and service sectors of France and West Germany were forging ahead. In a continuing recession, with the transfer of manpower from the land to the towns slowed down by unemployment, agricultural expenditure is spiralling out of control — and the entry of Greece, Spain and Portugal, all with large numbers of small farmers, into the EEC will not help matters.

Britain, arriving a decade too late for the economic 'miracles' of the boom, was still in good time for the crisis. Mrs Thatcher has drawn everyone's attention to the problem of our budgetary contributions — it is reported that her persuasive advocacy of Britain's case at the Dublin summit even put German Chancellor Schmidt to sleep — but has obtained little response from our 'Community partners'.

Basically we put more than our share *into* the EEC because (1) we still import over 50% of our foodstuffs from outside the Community and pay high tariffs and levies on them direct to Brussels; (2) we have a very extensive trade in other goods with non-EEC countries and therefore pay a disproportionate amount (27%) of the Common External Tariff — again straight to Brussels; (3) Britain's stagnant economy has a smaller share of investment and thus a higher share of consumption in total output than the other members, but consumption goods attract VAT, of which the EEC again takes a cut.

We take far less than our share *out* of the EEC budget because nearly all EEC expenditure goes in agricultural subsidies and we have a very small agricultural sector. The result is that our *net* contributions, the difference between what we pay and what we get back, was £840 millions in 1979, by far the largest of any of the EEC countries, while our actual production per head is lower than any of them except Italy and Ireland. The figure is expected to jump to £1,215 million in 1980, of which we might get a quarter remitted back as a result of Mrs Thatcher's brave performance in Dublin[1].

The reward for such generosity is of course that British consumers are permitted to buy EEC food at CAP prices, which costs us around £300 million a year more than would buying the same goods on world markets[2].

All the fuss about the budget and the CAP, however, should not distract us from the most important aspects of our membership of the EEC, that is what it is doing to our trading performance in manufactured goods. This is a lot more difficult to measure than our losses on agriculture, but a recent article by three Cambridge economists makes some attempt to assess the damage[3]. If they are even approximately correct as to orders of magnitude it is a very serious business indeed.

The difficulty is that Britain's trading performance has been deteriorating anyway due to other problems besides the EEC. But after allowing for these factors as accurately as possible, the article concludes that our imports of manufactured goods may have increased by about £2,000 million in 1977 as a result of EEC membership while our exports have increased by very little, if at all. (This figure is at 1970 prices, at present day prices it would be considerably larger — an adverse swing of about 6% on our manufacturing trade).

The real cost of all these losses — on budget contributions, farm prices, manufacturing trade — is substantially higher than their direct effect on the balance of payments, because of the traditional approach of British economic policy, which is to respond to a deteriorating balance with deflationary measures. Thus we get more unemployment, stagnation and less domestic production.

One further aspect of our membership is worth mentioning. This is the way in which the Thatcher-Joseph industrial policy is playing into the hands of the EEC Commission and giving them some relief in their attempts to manage the crisis — needless to say at Britain's expense. The Commission's industrial policy has shifted some way since the 'competitive' bonanza of the sixties; interventions of various kinds are being tried, cartels of big firms hit by overproduction are

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being tolerated or even encouraged, protective measures against Third World and Comecon products adopted. In all this there is one big problem facing the Commission — excess capacity. If the recession continues, as it will, then productive capacity will have to lie idle in many industries — steel, motor vehicles, shipbuilding, shipping, chemicals, textiles and others — reducing profitability and inhibiting new investments.

The EEC wants to eliminate productive capacity in these industries, but each of the member states naturally thinks that the others are in the best position to make such sacrifices. That is, apart from Britain's government which has turned its back on support for industry at the very moment when our 'partners' are breaking all the neo-liberal rules in the book to make the burden of the crisis fall elsewhere. No wonder industrial Commissioner D'Avignon was ecstatic at the closures recently announced by British Steel — it means he will have less trouble with the French and West Germans.

All in all, it's quite a hefty bill for membership of a crisis-ridden organisation, but the Tories are of course proclaiming themselves 'the party of Europe'. Political parties representing the British people will find the arguments pointing to a more negative conclusion.

[1]*Labour Party Economic Review*, No 2, 1979.
[2]Cambridge *Economic Policy Review*, No 5, 1979.
[3]Fetherston, Moore and Rhodes, 'EEC Membership and UK trade in Manufactures' *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, No 4, 1979.

SCOTLAND 1979 — A CATALOGUE OF DISASTERS

West-Central Scotland — the industrial belt around the city of Glasgow — probably lost more manufacturing industry during 1979 than any other part of Britain. Given the overall pace of deindustrialisation in Britain, the current situation in West-Central Scotland is without comparison in post-war history. The table below shows the major closures or redundancies announced or implemented during the last year or so.

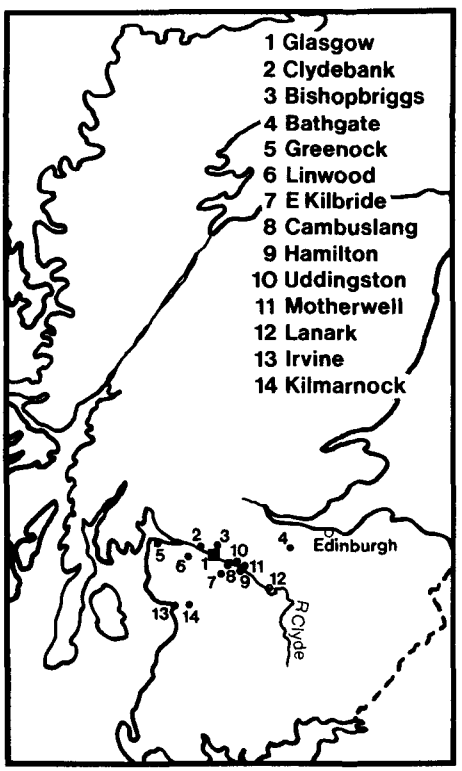
The table includes only some of the larger companies involved. Estimates of the total loss of jobs in West-Central Scotland over the last 12 months are as high as 30,000, taking into account not only the list shown but the smaller, less dramatic cutbacks in large firms which have received little publicity, and the hundreds of closures amongst small firms in fields such as engineering, sub-contracting and, especially, textiles.

Prospects for the future are equally grim. It is difficult to be completely confident about the remaining several thousand jobs at Talbot, Linwood. Caterpillar Tractors appears to be considering a rundown of their major Uddingston plant, and job security at Rolls-Royce's East Kilbride works seems shakey in the light of that company's attempts to turn itself into a multinational. Above all, the current Government's handling of the public sector in manufacturing industry raises fears for the operations in West-Central Scotland of British Leyland (Bathgate and Glasgow), the British Steel Corporation (North Lanarkshire) and British Shipbuilders (Glasgow and Greenock).

In most of the cases listed in the table below, local trade union organisations have either had their recommendations to fight redundancies rejected by the workforce, or they have recommended acceptance of redundancy terms. In at least two cases (Singers and Massey Feguson) the workforce have, at the instigation of their stewards, acquiesced in closures on the basis of co-operation with management to attempt to find alternative uses for the plant. The willingness of workers to fight appears lower than it has been for decades.

The experiences of Clydeside in the past period are probably more acute than in most other areas, in that job loss has been higher, but they are fairly typical in that (a) the rate of closures has been accelerating and (b) there has been little *effective* resistance from the labour movement.

The labour movement, and in particular the Communist Party, has three major responsibilities in the current situation. The first is to understand clearly the processes which lie behind the collapse of manufacturing industry, in areas such as West-Central Scotland. The second is to have a clear programme for immediate action to fight closures which is related to a longer term economic strategy. The third is to have the political and organisational ability to translate that programme into effective mass action. Only then can we reverse the decline in morale which has developed, as time after time the trade union movement has appeared



Massey Ferguson	Kilmarnock	Agricultural Machinery	1100 jobs
Monsanto	Irvine	Artificial Fibres	1000 jobs
SKF	Irvine	Ball Bearings	600 jobs
Talbot	Linwood	Motor vehicles	1200 jobs
BSC	Glengarnock	Steel making	600 jobs
Prestcold	Hillington (Glasgow)	Compressors	700 jobs
Singers	Clydebank	Sewing Machines	3500 jobs
JBE	Clydebank	Gas Turbines	600 jobs
Goodyear	Drumchapel (Glasgow)	Tyres	700 jobs
Rest Assured	Queenslie (Glasgow)	Bedding	150 jobs
Templetons	Glasgow & Hamilton	Carpets	200 jobs
British Shipbuilders	Glasgow & Lower Clyde	Ships	2000 jobs
BSC	Lanarkshire Works, Motherwell	Steel making	600 jobs
BSC	Hallside Works, Cambuslang	Steel making & Rolling	700 jobs
BSR	East Kilbride	Domestic-Electrical	1000 jobs
Collins	Bishopbriggs, Glasgow	Printing & Publishing	200 jobs
			14850 jobs

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helpless before an inexorable tide of closures. We need to start winning battles, and soon, if areas like West-Central Scotland are not to be devastated to an even greater extent than took place in the 30s.

The recent spate of closures in West-Central Scotland highlights one aspect of the decline of manufacturing industry located in Britain which must be carefully noted by the labour movement. Some of the names on the above list reflect the continuing decline of British-owned manufacturing industry — the consequence of decades of under-investment related directly to British capitalism's huge scale of overseas investment. There is unfortunately little that is new in this. But others (Massey Ferguson, Monsanto, SKF, Talbot, Goodyear) represent redundancies in the wave of 'new' industries which were brought into areas such as West-Central Scotland over the last thirty years or so, partly on the basis of the package of government incentives known as 'regional policy'. The two decades following the Second World War saw a hugh influx of such firms into areas like the West of Scotland. Many of them were American-owned (so much so that Scotland reputedly has now the second-highest level of American investment as a proportion of total investment of any country in the world, after Canada).

North American owned firms such as Massey Ferguson, Monsanto, Goodyear and Caterpillar came to Britain in the post-war period because Britain represented one of the most politically stable bases from which to penetrate the European market. Within Britain, they came to 'development areas', but especially Scotland, because of regional incentives amongst other reasons. The precise reasons for the recent spate of closures vary in each case, but several underlying currents can be identified. The first is the relative decline of American capital in world markets, in the face of EEC and Japanese competition. The Goodyear and Monsanto closures can be directly related to this. The second is the impact of Britain's EEC membership, and the third is the non-interventionist industrial policy of the current Government. It is significant that two major Scottish manufacturing operations have changed or are changing from US to EEC ownership in the past two years (PSA's acquisition of Chrysler, and UIE's takeover of the Marathon oil rig yard in Clydebank, which is in process at the time of writing). Massey Ferguson are shutting their Kilmarnock plant on the basis of centralising combine harvester production in their French factory. The company hung fire on their final closure decision until after the General Election, as it was obvious that a Tory government would make it easier for the British plant to be closed. The impact of these processes has been that many of the 'mobile' multinational owned manufacturing operations in Scotland have shut up shop in the past period, and others are likely to follow suit.

The past year's catalogue of disasters poses us with two urgent problems. The first is: in the short term, given a general lack of new investment in British manufacturing industry, how should the labour movement respond to incoming foreign investment? The second, and much more critical, is: how and where are we going to get an effective fightback? In the longer term, it is clear that the labour movement, especially in areas such as Scotland, will have to reappraise its whole approach to regional policy — an issue which will increase in importance as 1930s type regional disparities reopen across Britain. On all these issues the resources of the Communist Party, both theoretical and organisational, must be mobilised on a scale appropriate to the gravity of the situation.

Contributors:
Paul Fauvet
John Grahl, Doug Harrison,

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Brian Simon

Education and the Right Offensive

The Left has been on the defensive. What are the Tories trying to do and how can we reverse the tide?

It is now generally agreed among the Left that the return of the Thatcher government marks a new phase in British political developments. 'Thatcherism', as Martin Jacques put it in his analysis, 'represents a new kind of global rightism. Its offensive impinges on most areas of society' (*Marxism Today*, October 1979). The nature, rise, and above all the ideology of 'the new Right' as 'the seedbed from which Thatcherism has grown' has been acutely analysed by Andrew Gamble (*Marxism Today*, November 1979). Gamble isolates two strands in its composition; first, the concept of the social market economy as a primary objective, involving the abandonment of government interventionism and reliance on primary market forces in determining economic development, and second, 'the new populism' — focussing on 'issues like immigration, crime and punishment, strikes, social security abuse and permissiveness'. In this connection Gamble refers to the great variety of new right wing pressure groups which have germinated 'like dragons' teeth for the last 15 years'.

Thatcher's return was, of course, facilitated by the convergence of a number of factors following an aggressive campaign and ideological stance appealing to individualist, rather than social values. On the side of Labour the lack of any kind of socialist perspective meant that the Thatcher campaign won by default. Gamble is right in saying that the new, populist campaign and propaganda had been under way over the last 15 years — and steadily gaining in momentum. A good example of Labour's loss of the initiative, on an important social and political issue over these years is that of education. This also is the scene of a successful rightist ideological campaign initiated by the series of Black Papers from 1969, and cleverly exploited by the maverick populist agitator Rhodes Boyson, now rewarded by appointment as a Minister of State for Education. There is no doubt whatsoever that this is an area that gained the Tories many votes, and contributed handsomely to their electoral victory. As an important area both in its own right, and in terms of educational and political strategy and tactics, these developments deserve analysis, in the attempt both to determine what went wrong and why, and to contribute towards discussion of a new perspective for the Left around which a wide popular movement may be developed.

I

In a nutshell, it is now clearly apparent that, from the early 1970s at least, Labour's educational policy, together with its supporting ideology, lost momentum and popular appeal. This, of course, was not peculiar to this particular field — it was the same in other fields of social policy (for instance, health), as well as in economic and political policy generally. In effect the crucial issue was the failure to adopt socialist policies, or policies that could clearly and definitely be presented as linking educational measures with socialist political perspectives. Instead, Labour pinned its policy to an illusory belief that persistent economic growth would allow a continuous increase in public expenditure within a mixed economy and, on this basis, espoused an egalitarian ideology rather than a socialist one. Hence the partially successful transformation to comprehensive secondary education was pursued not so much for its class significance, in terms of breaking down minority privileges and opening the perspective of more radical change, but more particularly as a limited reform motivated by Labour's objective of 'modernisation' within a mixed economy, leaving power relations unchanged.

The dominant Labour ideology motivating this reform lay in the social engineering theories of Anthony Crosland and Shirley Williams whose objectives comprised the efficient functioning of a mixed economy, requiring assimilation of the workforce to acceptance of capitalist social relations. Hence the emphasis on the need for social harmony, to be achieved by a common experience of schooling, spiced with an 'egalitarian' rhetoric. As greater proportions of the secondary school population in maintained schools were reorganised into comprehensive schools (30 per cent at the end of Labour's 60s governments, 60 per cent at the end of Thatcher's four years at the Department of Education and Science to 1974, and now 82 per cent), and as initial enthusiasm and public support began to wane, no new perspectives for more radical educational change linked to social change were, or, within this ideology, could be advanced. It was into the vacuum created by this situation that the Tory populist assault was mounted, not only on comprehensive education, but also on a whole number of related issues ('progressive' education, authority and discipline, and in particular educational 'standards') on which the Left was divided or confused. In the circumstances, this campaign proved highly successful. There are many lessons here for the Left.

Developing Educational Issues

A few words may be said to remind ourselves of the kind of issues which fuelled the new Right in education, and the circumstances

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which gave it its opportunity. The early 1960s saw a developing consensus between the more advanced (or 'progressive') Tories (epitomised by Edward Boyle) and the Labour leadership as to the necessity for educational advance, the basis of which lay both in the degree of economic growth and technological advance then experienced, and in the need for higher educational levels to meet this situation. It was a Tory Prime Minister (Home) who, the day the Robbins report was published in 1963, announced to the country on TV that the Tory government would implement the full recommendations. The Tory Minister (Boyle) steered an Education Act through Parliament in 1964 which was specifically designed to ease the transition to comprehensive education in urban areas. The leadership of both parties at this stage were concerned to encourage 'modernisation' of the educational structure while, of course, preserving the independent sector ('public' schools) inviolate. It was at this point also that considerable resources were devoted to modernisation of the curriculum through massive funding first by the Nuffield Foundation and then by the newly formed Schools Council of curriculum reform projects in the sciences, mathematics, and etc. Through the period of Labour's 60s governments (1964-70) comprehensive secondary education was encouraged, higher education expanded (especially teacher training), while even the neglected primary sector received a degree of attention and support reflected in the setting up of the Plowden Committee (by Boyle in 1963) which reported in a highly 'progressive' vein four years later (January 1967). Indeed that report epitomised, in a sense, Labour's dilemma. Predicating the inevitable continuance of full employment, increasing affluence, the abolition of poverty, and a constantly rising level of public expenditure it was probably the last semi-official statement of the then popular and widespread view of continuous social/economic advance within a capitalist system, but one comprising a public sector of considerable significance. Less than a year later the harsh economic climate of the late 60s had already called this illusory perspective into question.

It is worth recalling that, just as the *first* action of the Thatcher government of 1979 was to pass an Act repealing Labour's 1976 measure aimed at bringing recalcitrant local authorities into line on comprehensive reorganisation, so the *first* action of the Heath government of 1970 was to 'withdraw' Labour's Circular of 1965 (10/65) which pressured local authorities to introduce comprehensive reorganisation. As Secretary of State for Education, Thatcher, already emerging as a doctrinaire rightist politician, took this action (in 1970) to 'free' local authorities (as she put it), and did her best over the next four years to slow down the rate of advance towards comprehensive education. But she was quite unable to stop it, as the figures given earlier show. In fact the rate of advance, in terms of the numbers of schools and pupils, was greater under Thatcher than under the previous Labour administration. By this time comprehensive education had become a 'rolling reform'; plans made under the Labour government were coming to fruition and many Tory authorities (for instance, Leicestershire) were enthusiastically developing their local systems (this pride in local achievement, incidentally, should by no means be ignored).

Impact of Recession

However it was in this period that the profound world economic recession, magnified in Britain as a result of the increasingly serious weakness of our economic and industrial base, resulted in a policy of massive cuts in projected public expenditure including education. This process had already started under Labour — in 1968, for instance, the projected (and promised) raising of the school leaving age was postponed, to be implemented, incidentally, by the Tories in 1972. So the position was ambivalent, showing contradictory tendencies; Tory educational policy, involving strict control and

financial retrenchment, was announced characteristically in a White Paper entitled *Framework for Expansion* (1972), and this pledged the Tories to a massive expansion of the nursery sector as proposed by the Plowden Committee (a policy that was never implemented).

In this 'betwixt and between period' (early 1970s) a general disenchantment with education as *the* palliative for social ills and discontent spread from the United States across the Atlantic; the Coleman and Jencks reports of 1966 and 1970 both supported the conclusion that schools 'made no difference' to the distribution of wealth and income, ie, that education could not effectively bring about social change in terms of a more egalitarian — but capitalist — society. At the same time the well-known 'Headstart' programmes in the United States, which aimed to enrich the early education of the poorest sections of the population, were (prematurely) declared a failure. All this contributed to an atmosphere of lack of confidence in the value of educational reform and change which was quickly exploited by the new Right in this country who, for instance, in whipping up parental support for the defence of selective schools in areas undergoing reorganisation, had already developed something of a populist basis (particularly among the petty bourgeosie) for their attacks on comprehensive education, as well as on 'progressive' methods, new 'integrated' curricula, non-streaming and other developments which they identified (often wrongly) with the transition to the single secondary school.

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Tyndale

This movement received an enormous fillip from the Tyndale affair of 1974-76, when a group of teachers who espoused an extreme version of 'progressive' teaching techniques were exposed to intense mass media attacks and widespread criticism over several months or even years. The real issue at stake here, it soon became apparent, was that of control: who, in fact, is or should be responsible for what goes on inside schools — the teachers, the parents, the local authority or the state? Although the issues were confused, Tyndale provided fertile

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ground for the promotion of the ideological cohesion of the new Right, epitomised in the outlook expressed in the leader columns of the *Telegraph*, *Mirror* and *Sun* as well as *The Times* (which inveighed editorially against 'the wild men of the classroom'), as also on TV. Indeed the whole question of control and authority in the schools was highlighted in a series of TV programmes, including one presenting what was later admitted to be a very slanted view of a single comprehensive school, introduced as 'typical' of all such schools by the BBC. (The role of the mass media in this whole movement is worth investigation).

The critique of contemporary educational developments reached a climax with the publication of the so-called 'Bennett report' (actually a small scale research project) in May 1976[1]. This was interpreted on TV and in the press as showing that 'traditional', 'authoritarian' teachers who used methods of which the Plowden Committee, for instance, thoroughly disapproved, achieved generally better results than 'progressive' or 'informal' teachers using modern methods. (It is worth noting that this is how the results were presented by the mass media, which gave the research immense and unusual coverage, in spite of the fact that the teacher achieving the 'best' results used 'informal' or 'progressive' techniques). All this formed the background to the Prime Minister's (Callaghan) Ruskin speech (October 1976), the so-called 'Great Debate' on education promulgated by Shirley Williams, and later developments — a clear but belated (and largely ineffective) attempt by Labour to steal the Tory ('new Right's') clothes and regain the initiative. That this was largely ineffective was because Labour had no clear answers to the questions raised, and no clear perspective as to the direction of development. Their reaction was to play for time, try to upset no one, and go on in the old way.

Weaknesses of the Left

But it is not only Labour which may be criticised; the Left as a whole, fragmented (particularly in education), failed to develop agreed alternative policies uniting the struggle for educational change with relevant and realisable political perspectives. This is undoubtedly partly due to the failure of the Left to tackle theoretical or ideological issues affecting both the content and the process of education itself, and its relation to social and political change. In this context the Left in education includes the various socialist and radical groupings of teachers around such journals as *Socialist Teacher*, *Radical Education*, *Rank and File*, *Socialism and Education* (Labour teachers) as well as the Labour left and the Communist Party. The whole, potentially strong movement represented by these groupings, was itself split down the middle on the issues raised by the Tyndale affair relating to the control of schools and the professional rights of teachers (eg, how far teacher control is legitimate); it is similarly split on the issue of teaching methods, or rather on the whole approach to teaching and learning, tending to accept the current dichotomies of 'progressive/traditional', 'formal/informal', and siding with one side or the other, in spite of the clear conclusion of Marxist educators (eg, Lenin, Gramsci) on the need for structure, clarity of purpose, and the *formative* power of education. That the Tories, or rather the new Right could make the fight for 'standards' a rallying cry winning mass support is itself a criticism of Labour and the Left generally in that the ground was left open to the Right to exploit this initiative.

A political movement representing the interests of the mass of the people, as the labour movement and the Left generally does, must be concerned with standards — with ensuring at least minimum levels of literacy and numeracy since both cover symbolic systems which are the key to all learning and culture. Yet the way was left clear for a mass, popular campaign *by the Tories* on this specific issue, even though it is apparent, from their actions since taking office, that this interest in 'standards' was largely rhetorical. Nevertheless the agitation on standards was a popular agitation which gained mass support; this was *the* context of the rise of Rhodes Boyson who boasted, correctly, that he could fill any hall in the country, and who, with his idiosyncratic personality and experience as a comprehensive head, was able fully to exploit the situation in the interests of the Tory backlash. It is true that every kind of fraudulent technique was used in this campaign, beginning with Cyril Burt's fictitious 'data' in Black Paper II purporting to prove a sharp decline in literacy over the last 50 years — a totally fraudulent claim but one given enormous coverage (and support) by the media. But this hardly exonerates the Left from responsibility for the failure to tangle effectively with these issues, to adopt a clear, rationally based and theoretically valid position and to make that position widely known. There is now a new opportunity, indeed necessity, to do precisely this. In the next section the nature and impact of Tory policy will be analysed before discussing the new perspective for the transformation of education as an essential aspect of the transition to socialism.

The Left as a whole, fragmented (particularly in education), failed to develop agreed alternative policies.

II

There is no question that the ideological assault mounted by the Tories on contemporary educational trends and developments — particularly the critique concerning 'standards', permissive methods and practices in the schools, and the like — contributed significantly to their return with a largely increased vote. It also provided the ideological base for the series of actions taken by the Government since May. It is now clearly apparent that the main objectives of government policy are to strengthen the independent sector and to downgrade the public sector in education and starve it of resources. In particular the intention is to halt the advance to the establishment of a fully comprehensive system of secondary education and to turn back the clock. Each action of the Government ties in with this general objective, and indeed the attack on education, with the aim of bringing about a decisive change to a new direction, has, significantly, been given top priority with the introduction of *two* Bills on the issue within the first six months of office.

Splitting Comprehensives

The first Bill, as already mentioned, which received Royal Assent in July, declared in effect that comprehensive education was no longer 'national policy' by repealing the 1976 Act, so allowing reactionary local authorities not only *not* to reorganise their schools as comprehensive systems, but to go further and split up existing comprehensive schools to bring back the grammar/secondary modern division. Thus large authorities such as Essex and Kent have withdrawn proposals to go comprehensive submitted under the 1976 Act and propose to retain their existing divided systems in wide areas of the counties concerned, while urban authorities such as Bolton and Kingston on Thames have taken similar action. The importance of this is not only that selection is retained in important areas of the country (500,000 children were still in secondary modern schools in 1977), but that it keeps the option open of a massive *reversion* to selective systems if and when this is thought to be politically (and socially) desirable. The option of splitting existing comprehensive schools into grammar and modern is under consideration by at least one local authority, and this course also may be encouraged.

[1]Neville Bennett, *Teaching Styles and Pupil Progress* 1976.

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Further actions taken by the Government over the summer were also directed at halting the movement towards comprehensive education and strengthening the independent sector. First, there was the decision, announced by Mark Carlisle in June that the proposal originally made by the Schools Council for the substitution of a single examination at 16 plus, in place of the present, divisive, double examinations (GCE and CSE) would not be implemented, thus actively preventing schools from developing unified and integrated courses for *all* their students between the ages of 11 and 16, when the examinations are taken. The Labour government itself had, typically, prevaricated on this issue, which has massive support in the teacher unions, setting up a committee to assess its feasibility (Waddell committee). This committee finally reported *in favour* of the move shortly before the election. The Tory decision to retain the obsolete system inherited from the past and devised in the context of the divided system before comprehensive reorganisation is clearly directed to forcing comprehensive schools to continue operating internal systems of differentiation between pupils at the ages of 13 or 14. It is, therefore, logically in line with their whole policy.

Second, the Government issued new regulations in July permitting local authorities to finance pupils (out of the rates) to attend independent schools. This was an area where Labour had been operating, to some effect, to put an end to this practice, which is a means both of retaining and reinforcing selective processes in the schools, and of shoring up independent schools. By pursuing this policy with energy, Tory dominated local authorities will be able to use public money to strengthen the independent sector, quite apart from or in addition to, the support accorded to the independent sector from the Assisted Places Scheme, analysed below.

Cuts in Public Expenditure

Third, since we are dealing with these matters chronologically, the massive 'real' cuts in the rate support grant (RSG), in line with the Thatcher government's overall strategy relating to public expenditure, objectively mean that the publicly provided system of education, in contradistinction to the private or 'independent' sector, is to be, or is already being, starved of resources — of the funds needed to carry on and improve its work. Carlisle argues that these cuts will not affect 'standards'; their primary targets lie in school meals and transport. But even if this is accepted, the cuts being demanded of local authorities, particularly those planned for next year and the year after, mean cuts in the teaching force on a massive scale as well as in capitation grants — that is, on the money available to schools for books, paper and resources generally that are already biting deep. Thus while the independent sector is to be reinforced financially, the public sector — where the mass of the nation's children are educated — is already being severely pruned, though this is no more than a foretaste of what is to come.

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Fourth, and from the point of view of overall strategy the most important of these measures, there is the so-called 'Assisted Places Scheme' (APS) brought in in the Education Bill before Parliament as I write. This is a scheme to build a selective system in 'independent' schools by the infusion of £70 million of public money per annum — money saved from, and therefore taken from, the publicly maintained system. The scheme is to be brought in on the specious grounds that the former are, and the latter are not, capable of giving an effective education to the most advanced students.

Encouraging Private Education

The 12,000 to 15,000 children who will be selected *each year* for this treatment form from 2 per cent to 3 per cent of an age group, but Peter Newsam, Director of Education for the ILEA, calculates that they form some 20 per cent of that proportion of an age group that stays on at school to study in sixth forms or colleges for 2 or more 'A' levels (GCE). In this sense alone the scheme comprises an extremely serious threat to the viability of advanced work in the publicly maintained system as a whole. But Newsam argues further that this proportion may turn out to be considerably higher, and this for three reasons. First, as part of the APS it is suggested that additional transfers to independent schools be arranged to take place at sixth form level (from age 16); second, local assisted places schemes such as that already being operated by the Greater Manchester Council (a Tory authority) may well multiply, whereby local authorities covering wide areas but *without* educational responsibilities set up trust funds financed from the rates and use the income to subsidise pupils at independent schools; and third, the tax rebates given to high income groups may result in greater demand for places in independent, as opposed to maintained, schools. If all these factors operate, as they well may, Newsam predicts that the consequences for advanced work (at 'A' level) in the maintained sector 'would be profound'. In general, within a static or declining total of resources available to education, these measures, he claims, reflect 'a shift in the balance of expenditure towards independent schools' (*Education*, 24 August 1979). This is certainly the case. There is little wonder, then, that this clear and vindictive attack on local maintained systems of education has aroused strong outspoken opposition on the part of the Society of Education Officers, representative of Directors of Education and Chief Education Officers throughout the country. In an unusually outspoken comment submitted to the Secretary of State they say that 'the picture of LEAs running establishments little better than good secondary modern schools, while their able children go to independent schools is unacceptable' (*Education*, 2 November 1979).

But Education Bill No 2 goes much further than this. Quite apart from the proposals regarding the Assisted Places Scheme it contains a group of clauses designed to undermine existing local comprehensive systems — to turn them into covertly selective systems giving special advantages to middle class children whose parents are able to play the system. The technique here is to extend the scope of 'parental choice' and give it statutory backing in such a way as to ensure that 'popular' schools become middle class enclaves while inner city schools catering for the working class go to the wall. As Caroline Benn puts it, the 'new 11 plus' is based on the opting out of comprehensive education of the selected; the new 11 plus is 'covert, restricted, optional and socially based' — delegated (through 'parental choice') 'to individual head teachers of grammar, aided and feepaying schools'. Under the banner of slogans about 'choice' new, socially based, differentiating structures are being built into the publicly provided school system (see *Forum*, Spring 1980). Through measures such as these the ground is being prepared for a decisive turn in the structure and function of the education system.

No attempt will be made here to record or evaluate the total impact of government policy on education. The severe cut back in university and higher educational finance generally (which has led to strongly worded protests by the Vice Chancellors Committee among others), in adult education, in the Youth Opportunities and other schemes is already well-known. Attention here is directed specifically to the schools. One general point may be reiterated: the claim that all these measures will not affect 'standards' in the publicly maintained sector

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Mark Carlisle

One advantage of the aggressive policy now being pursued is that the issues are becoming clear for all to see.

can be seen as entirely specious. As indicated earlier, the fight on 'standards' now stands revealed as no more than a populist, rhetorical device in the fight for political power. The Tory government is not concerned with standards, but with the exercise of *control*; and this in order to remodel the educational system so that it overtly reinforces social, or class stratification.

What it all represents

This is entirely consistent with Tory educational policies over the last fifty years and more, though, perhaps as a result of the increasing democratic challenge in education, the policy is now being pursued with an assertiveness and vigour beyond what has been attempted in the past. There is, however, a clear parallel between current Tory policy and intentions and the actions of the Tory administration in the years 1895 to 1905. This was a decisive period in the structuring of the English educational system when a reactionary Tory administration successfully halted a broad movement for educational advance based on democratic, locally elected School Boards, and instead imposed the selective, hierarchic system which only began to be effectively challenged in the 1960s. The democratic movement in education, in effect, then suffered a severe setback from which it took years to recover.

What we are now experiencing bears a distinct relationship to these earlier developments. The present Government is now involved in a clear, overt attempt to capitalise immediately on the May election success and not only to halt the swing to potentially democratic forms, but to import a new direction to policy by deliberately strengthening and stabilising the most divisive features in the present system. It is not commonly realised that some 800,000 students of secondary school age — that is, 26.7 per cent of the total number of pupils in secondary schools — are still today in selective schools of one kind or another (selected either on wealth or 'merit'). 410,000 are in independent schools (already subsidised out of public moneys to the tune of some £130 millions in various ways), while 128,000 more are in the old direct grant (now independent) schools, with 256,000 still in selective 'grammar' schools in the maintained sector. There is still a long way to go, and many battles to be fought, before all these are brought fully into locally controlled and financed systems of education.

What is becoming clear as an aggressive class policy in education is being carried through by a government (or Cabinet) with quite appropriate educational qualifications for such measures. The Cabinet (Thatcher excluded) consists 80 per cent of public school products (30 per cent from one school alone — Eton). The overwhelming majority of Tory MPs were themselves educated at public schools. No doubt they all (including Mark Carlisle) send their own children to independent schools to be educated. Until recently, Tory governments at least went through the motions of showing some concern for the system of education they administered. Not so in this case. Not only is their contempt for the publicly maintained system self-evident; their determination to strengthen their own base within the independent system is also clear and blatant. This implies that their room for manoeuvre has narrowed — and points to clear weaknesses and dangers to themselves in the policy being pursued.

III

Tory policy in education, as in other areas, represents a very definite challenge to the Left. One advantage of the aggressive policy now being pursued is that the issues are becoming clear for all to see. The challenge is now to formulate an equally definite policy and strategy, covering the whole field of education, relating strategic and tactical proposals to the issue of popular control and democratisation in the struggle for socialism. The aim must be the transformation of education in the direct interests of the mass of the people, working class and middle strata alike. What is required is a popular programme, taking up the real issues which have been highlighted, and transforming them into a programme of action both on a national and (equally important) on a local basis.

This involves action in four main areas:

1. Against the cuts

Already a mass movement of great potential power and force is building up in the struggle against the cuts which, in education, will directly affect a high proportion of the population. In this campaign, organisations of the labour movement (including, of course, the Communist Party) must initiate, and support mass, popular, local actions of protest — explaining the significance of the cuts and, in cooperation with other democratic organisations of all kinds, leading local community and neighbourhood actions in defence of the schools and schooling. The immediate issues here are the new transport fees to be imposed by the Education Bill now passing through Parliament, the break-up and actual sabotage of the school meals service (on which much might be said), teacher and other cuts and redundancies, reductions in finance available for capitation grants, as well as increased charges for adult education and recreational activities, cuts in the Youth Opportunities Programme, and so on. Teachers, students, ancillary workers, parents and indeed the labour movement as a whole need to and are already finding new and appropriate organisational forms by which mass joint struggles may be carried through both locally and nationally demanding the reversal of policies that strike directly at the quality and value of schooling.

Through activities of this kind broad, popular alliances can be built up which, with effective leadership, should have the permanently valuable result of bringing about a much closer popular involvement in the schools and their work. Such an involvement — or alliance — between different organisations or sections of the people in defence of local systems of education and even of particular schools threatened by cuts and closure opens out the perspective of the creation of local groupings or organisations having the knowledge and the power potentially to exercise control, in cooperation with local authorities, over local systems of education. To achieve this is an essential condition for bringing about a transformation of the schools and of education as an aspect of the transition to socialism.

This implies utilising, activating or mobilising existing democratic organisations, as well as influencing local government machinery *in support of* local systems of education, and in the process achieving the transformation of what some refer to as the 'local state' — so that it is

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responsive to the people's will. In this connection it is of the highest importance to the Left and the labour movement generally to defend and extend local democracy and to oppose centralising tendencies, symptomatic of Tory and Labour government policies alike.

2. Extend the public system

Second, the challenge of contemporary Tory measures highlights the need to fight consciously and deliberately to extend the scope of the publicly provided system and to prevent the deliberate shift of resources towards the independent sector. Since the Tories have thrown down a challenge on this specific issue (with the APS), the Left are now in a strong position in terms of logic to formulate a counter challenge, and to adopt it as policy. This involves the declared and open objective of bringing about a decisive shift, in the allocation of resources, from the independent to the public sector. The following could each form points of policy: (i) cease state subsidies to independent schools now running at some £60 to £80 millions a year, in the form of school fees paid to diplomats, military personnel, and etc, and instead provide boarding places within the maintained sector (many are already available); (ii) remove charitable status to endowed schools (as most independent schools are, especially the most prestigious such as Eton and Harrow), by which such schools are not subject to taxation; (iii) connected with this, remove the de-rating measures on independent schools, ensuring that they pay full rates; (iv) by Act of Parliament remove the power from local authorities to set up trust funds to finance pupils at independent schools.

Each of these actions can be justified on grounds of equity (or equitable treatment) alone. But the perspective which is now raised by the Tories themselves goes further than this; it is to bring all such schools into the publicly maintained sector, and so under local and national democratic control. This would, of course, require a Parliamentary measure; but the whole issue was subject to enquiry in the 1960s by the Donnison Commission, and in any case there are powerful historical precedents for legislative action along these lines (most of the upper secondary schools in my county, Leicestershire, for instance, were originally independent — endowed — foundations.

schooling must be so designed as to provide effectively, for the mass of the people, access to knowledge, science and culture. It has never done so in the past, nor had this objective.

With one exception they all now form part of the local system of comprehensive schools).

3. Within the Schools

Third, the Left needs to agree on, and formulate, a clear and immediate policy concerning the development of comprehensive education. As a contribution to this the Education sub-committee of the Communist Party has published a discussion statement, *The Comprehensive School*, which contains the outlines of such a policy, and which can become the property (if necessary modified) of the broad democratic movement. The main issues raised include the need to establish genuinely comprehensive local systems of education, based on the neighbourhood principle — whereby each school acts as a centre for those living locally — and the extirpation of covert systems of selection through the operation of 'parental choice', as well as of systems which embody selective processes by retaining parallel systems of schools for students aged 13 or 14, the division being made by what is euphemistically called '*guided* parental choice'. The neighbourhood school system implies the provision of equal resources across the board, but with some discrimination in favour of schools disadvantageously situated. This involves a continuing fight against the implications for the 'choice' clauses in the current Education Bill.

Of great importance are the policy proposals concerning the internal organisation and functioning of comprehensive schools. There is first the question of the actual democratisation of the schools themselves — a step long overdue. The formation of school councils, consisting of representatives of the teachers, students and ancillary

A kind of romantic revolutionism that denies the need for political action and sees the isolated classroom as the focus and lever for social change.

workers, with clearly defined powers over the inner organisation and policy of the school, both in terms of its academic and pastoral functions, is proposed to replace the current authoritarian role of the Head (a situation peculiar to Britain), whereby he or she alone is responsible to the governors for the functioning of the school. A few schools already operate on these lines, as do schools in many European countries (both East and West). Such a step, giving those who work in the schools responsibility for their functioning, is fully in line with the Communist Party's and other proposals for industrial democracy, and would release a considerable amount of creative energy on the part of teachers and students. In connection with this, support for the foundation of student unions within the schools is also advocated, as also certain democratic reforms of governing bodies, including the involvement of parents and representatives of local community organisations in school government.

Of key importance for the Left is the neglected area of the curriculum. The single examination at 16 plus is, of course, strongly advocated, the central importance of which has already been discussed. This would enable all students to be kept together without differentiation to experience a common curriculum, or 'common core'. But as regards the curriculum itself there are, perhaps two main principles which should govern labour movement policy. First, schooling must be so designed as to provide effectively, for the mass of the people, access to knowledge, science and culture. It has never done so in the past, nor had this objective; nor does it do so now. Objectively, therefore, this demand (or policy) inevitably has revolutionary overtones. A content of education, appropriate for all at this particular moment in history needs to be identified, and determined. Teachers and the labour movement generally need to work together on this and to sort out the basic principles and components of such an education.

Secondly, that content of education must, so far as possible, reflect reality, both in terms of science and society, and be so designed as to promote positive social attitudes and knowledge. Much work going on now in the schools is beginning to reflect this approach. There is now a more conscious and deliberate effort in the schools, for instance, to combat both racist and sexist ideas widely prevalent in society at large. In this sense a transformation of the content of education is already beginning to take place. But this work is uncoordinated and meets specific difficulties; it is necessary now to begin work in a planned and effective manner to strengthen such positive developments as are already taking place. But in addition, in the fields of history, the social sciences, literature, and science itself deliberate moves are needed to transform the content of education to bring it into line with the interests, history and aspirations of ordinary people; and above all to cleanse it of its present contamination by bourgeois ideology. This is central to the conception of the transformation of education in line with the struggle for a socialist perspective.

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4. Some ideological questions

Finally there are a number of ideological questions, relating particularly to the concepts of 'progressive' and/or 'child-centred' education on which, as mentioned earlier, the Left is confused and divided, so giving space to the 'new Right' backlash. In my view, Marxists have a very definite contribution to make here provided that they base themselves on the thinking and analysis of such as Lenin and Gramsci[2], both of whom tangled with these issues in one way or another, both proceeding from the classic Marxist position on the relation between being and consciousness. The work of Soviet psychologists in particular, for instance the late Professor Luria, Leontiev and others, is also particularly helpful here, since these have focussed specifically on the elaboration of the Marxist approach to learning, and conducted a massive amount of relevant experimental work in this field. There is a lot of interest in their contribution among progressive circles both in Britain and the United States. In fact the basic principles of a Marxist approach to the whole business of learning, teaching and education generally is becoming clear, and we need to draw on this material in developing our own approach which must be specific to the particular situation, and historical traditions, of this country.

While stressing the educability of the normal child, and therefore opposing all fatalistic theories such as those embodied in intelligence testing, Marxism points to the need for the systematisation of education — to the need for structure and for the promotion of carefully designed activities on the part of the child in the process of learning. The role of the adult, and particularly of the teacher, is seen as all-important and a critique needs to be made of those ideas (theories or ideologies) which propose that the child's spontaneous activities and interests should form the ground base of education — a proposal that explicitly denies the need for systematisation and structure (and whose ideological roots lie in anarcho-liberalism). Such ideas, developed early in this century as a reaction from the rigid, arid practices of the past, certainly contain positive aspects, particularly in their espousal of more humanist relations between teacher and child. But when taken up by some on the Left, they lead to a kind of romantic revolutionism that denies the need for political action and sees the isolated classroom as the focus and lever for social change.

Schools have the function of deliberately promoting not only the skills of numeracy and literacy, but, through a progressively deepening grasp of knowledge and culture, the autonomy of the student able to function effectively within society, and to use his or her abilities to change that society according to developing aspirations. Such a formation cannot happen by chance; nor by relying on supposed inborn or innate tendencies and abilities. It requires recognition of the formative power of education, the consequent definition of objectives, and identification of the means by which these objectives may be realised. It is in this whole area that there needs to be discussion among the left democratic forces both among teachers and among the public at large, with the aim of clarifying both general principles, and appropriate procedures.

> Tory pretensions can and will be exposed for what they are – a last ditch attempt to consolidate, even extend, existing privileges.

This is a tall order, but we neglect it at our peril. Far too little attention has been devoted to it in the past. It is important now to recognise this, to make up for lost time, and institute a widespread discussion on these issues, drawing in as broad a spectrum of people as possible.

IV

The general direction of policy, then, must be to work towards the transformation of education at all levels in line with the struggle for socialism — the two go hand in hand. A viable policy for the Left in the current situation involves not only a fight against the cuts (though this is essential), not only a fight in defence of the gains made in comprehensive education (though this also is essential), but to go further and work for the implementation of fully comprehensive schooling embodying the independent sector and putting an end to all proposals as to its continued existence. And, alongside this, to work for the transformation of the school, its control and government, inner organisation, as well as its activities in terms of the content of education and methodology. It is argued here that mass, popular support can be won for a broad policy along these lines, holding out the perspective of popular involvement in the transformation of the school.

The conditions are ripe for such developments. The reduction in the number of school pupils over the next few years presents new possibilities to the teachers, provided that the Government's efforts to decimate the teaching force can be resisted (as experience shows they can). The micro-processor revolution, already under way, underlines the need for the development of new abilities and skills among the mass of the people and enhances the importance of education. In the process of struggle over the coming years, Tory pretensions can and will be exposed for what they are — a last ditch attempt to consolidate, even extend, existing privileges, and vested interests, and to strengthen the educational power base of their role. Much patient and hard work will be needed; but a new perspective for the Left is becoming clear. If we can seize this opportunity, the gains could be great. □

[2]Harold Entwistle's *Antonio Gramsci, Conservative Schooling for Radical Politics* (1979) is very relevant to this discussion.

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Campaigning Against the Cuts - the South Yorkshire experience

Dave Priscott
with the help of leading Sheffield Communists.

1 INTRODUCTION

The November 28th Demonstration and Lobby of Parliament against the cuts was a very considerable success — held on a working day only 7 months after the General Election, over 50,000 people took part, drawn from the main basic industries as well as from the public sector and representing all parts of Britain. The first initiative for this Lobby came from the labour movement in Sheffield and South Yorkshire, which made a major contribution to its success. This article aims to deal with some aspects of the movement in South Yorkshire, some of the lessons learned, and some of the problems of carrying the movement forward.

2 POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The General Election swing to the Tories was less evident in much of the North, including Yorkshire, than in the South and East of England. In the immediate aftermath of the election, the labour movement in Yorkshire was well aware of the attacks that it would now face and discussions started in many labour movement organisations on how to respond to this new situation. The contribution made by Communists to these wide-ranging discussions was based on the analysis of the election results made at the May meeting of the Communist Party's National Executive Committee, and on the development of that analysis made at the May and June meetings of the Party's Yorkshire District Committee.

The analysis made at these meetings included the following points:—

(i) We should not expect an automatic repeat of the 1970-74 scenario. The economic situation is different; and there are important differences in the political situation. It is a different Tory leadership, with a different approach to the problems. The labour movement is different, too. In spite of the Tory General Election victory in 1970, there was then a great deal of confidence on the Left, gained in successful struggles against the Wilson government — especially, the victory over *In Place of Strife*. But in 1979 the movement was less confident. Confusions and divisions over the 'social contract', setbacks suffered by the Left in some (not all) trade unions, the evidence in the election results of a strengthening of right wing ideas in the country, the worsening economic situation — all meant that not all sections of the movement were in as confident and combative a spirit as had been the case in 1970.

(ii) In these circumstances, it is too early to decide what particular issue, or combination of issues, might eventually become crucial in rousing a movement strong enough to force a General Election and a Tory defeat. It is therefore necessary to develop the fight back against the Tories on every possible issue, and at all levels — economic, political, ideological.

(iii) While seeking to develop movements on every possible issue, we should attach special significance to those issues that provide a basis for united action involving both the organised working class and wider sections of the community. The District Committee took the view that the scurrilous campaign against militant trade unionism conducted by the mass media, the Tories, and by Labour's right wing, had had some effects, and that persistent efforts were needed to overcome that situation. It might be possible for militant trade union action to obstruct Tory policies, even up to the point of forcing a General Election; but unless serious efforts were made to build unity between those militants and wider sections of public opinion, such a General Election would not necessarily end Tory rule.

(iv) The District Committee therefore considered that such issues as the fight against the Corrie Bill, and the campaign against Tory racist immigration legislation, were extremely important — around such issues unity could be built between the trade union movement and other streams of democratic struggle. But we saw the fight against the social service cuts as being particularly important, for a number of reasons.

First, of course, because the cuts affect practically every family in the country. Here, above all, the idea could be put into practice of using militant trade union action to defend the interests of the whole community, including the many thousands of families heavily dependent on the social services but lacking the 'muscle' of the organised industrial working class. Secondly, the 'cuts' issue has a dual character. The cuts are a very real and serious attack on material living standards — to deprive a working class family of decent education for their kids is as serious an attack on living standards as a wage cut or a rent increase. But the cuts are also an ideological attack. For over half a century the labour movement has fought for the idea that some aspects of life are so important that they should be matters of social concern, not left to each individual family to sink or swim — health, education, etc. It is this idea that is under attack with the cuts; and the fight back against the cuts therefore has a deeply political, ideological character. Thirdly, a great deal of social service administration is the responsibility of local government, working within legal and financial limits laid down by central government. Much of

The labour movement has fought for the idea that some aspects of life are so important that they should be matters of social concern, not left to each individual family to sink or swim.

Labour's traditional support stems from its record in local government, and many Labour councillors who on matters of national and internationl politics are not generally thought of as being on the left have nevertheless a real pride in their record of social service achievement. The 'cuts' issue therefore raised the possibility of a clash between Tory central government and Labour local authorities, and posed interesting problems and possibilities in the field of Communist-Labour relations.

Our Party Area leadership in Sheffield sought to apply this general approach in a special situation which did not apply elsewhere in Yorkshire. South Yorkshire, which includes Sheffield, is an important industrial region — steel, coal, engineering. The labour movement has a very long and rich tradition of struggle. The local

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authorities (South Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council, Sheffield District Council) are under strong Labour control and in some respects have a good record in the social services field — public transport in South Yorkshire as a whole, and housing in Sheffield, for example. On the industrial side, the Left is strong both in Sheffield engineering and in the Yorkshire coalfield and the Communist Party has deep roots in Sheffield's engineering factories and trade union movement.

The approach worked out by the Sheffield Area leadership of the Party started with four main points:

First: In the early stages, there should be no attempt to base the movement on a demand that the Councils should not implement the cuts.

After the Clay Cross experience, to make such a demand without first showing that there was in existence a movement with sufficient 'muscle' to back the Council up was a pointless exercise. Whether, at any stage, the demand for non-implementation is correct, and what it means and how it should be pursued — that is another matter dealt with later in this article. But we took the view that, in the initial stages, it would be a mistake to try to build a campaign around a demand that the Labour Council should not implement the cuts — the whole drive in the first place must be to build a united movement against the Tory government that was introducing the cuts. Without that approach, it would have been impossible to involve the broad spectrum of the labour movement that in fact *was* involved in this campaign.

Second: The main drive at the start should be to the key engineering factories in Sheffield and the miners of South Yorkshire, to win them for the idea of action — including industrial action at some stage — to defend their social services, and their Labour Councils, against Tory attacks.

We considered it a mistake to base the campaign on the public service unions whose members' jobs were threatened by the cuts. Clearly, they had a most important part to play in the struggle; but they lacked the 'muscle' that the industrial workers could deploy. Also, their main concern was — rightly and properly — the jobs of their members; but if broad public support was to be won, it had to be won primarily around the importance of the services to the public, not around the jobs of those employed in them. The general conception was, to bring a whole community into action against the cuts, with its best organised and most militant workers as the spearhead. This was not easy. Even militant Sheffield engineers and Yorkshire miners do not commit themselves to possible strike action for a clearly political objective without a struggle. In the past decade important inroads have been made into the traditional labour movement attitude that 'you don't use industrial action for political purposes', but this attitude remains strong. The realistic approach taken by the Sheffield comrades rules out the 'short cut' of depending on resolutions passed in leading trade union committees, and insisted that the battle had to be waged at the 'bottom', to win the mass of rank and file workers.

Third: The emphasis throughout should be to build the greatest possible degree of Labour-Communist unity.

The factory gate meetings with which the campaign opened were, at first, jointly addressed by Gordon Ashberry, Sheffield Area Secretary of the Communist Party, and Bill Moore, Labour candidate for West Derbyshire. Later, Labour councillors and leaders of public service unions took part in factory gate and shop floor meetings. Workplace branches of the Communist Party co-operated with Labour Party members in the factories in carrying the campaign forward. There were, of course, problems. Some Communists still have a sectarian resistance to this kind of united activity. There is also a kind of 'Labour Party sectarianism' which becomes increasingly evident the 'higher' one goes in the Labour Party's organisation. At no time was the Labour Party prepared to accept or admit to any official or formal unity with the Communist Party. Informal discussions were the rule, and when Communists attended meetings and conferences they did so as trade union representatives rather than as representatives of the Party — though the real role the Party played, and the tremendous work it did, were well understood by many who were not prepared to publicly acknowledge it.

Fourth: The aim should be to spark off a national movement, not just a Yorkshire movement.

The General Election results had shown that the Tories had made serious inroads into the working class vote in the South and East, but the North had shown a level of anti-Tory class feeling that made it evident that it was here in the North that the labour movement, and Communists especially, must undertake the responsibility of starting the fight back. The Sheffield Party leadership therefore maintained close contact with the national Party leadership and the *Morning Star*. In the early stages, some Sheffield comrades were critical of what was felt to be inadequate coverage in the *Star*, but as the campaign developed the paper did a tremendous job without which the Lobby could not have succeeded as it did. It was also evident that the call for the Lobby was being taken up very widely outside Yorkshire and it became a major issue at the Party's National Congress.

THE COURSE OF EVENTS

June and July were largely devoted to laying the basis for the campaign in the main industries.

The general pattern in engineering was: First, a factory gate meeting at which the case for action against the cuts was argued, with particular and careful attention to explaining the case for industrial action (see *Comment*, Aug 4th 1979, for more detail on this). Then, after discussions with the stewards, the key step was a shop-floor meeting at which workers were asked to pledge themselves, if called upon, to take industrial action to defend their Council and their social services from Tory attacks. Decisions to this effect were taken in several of the main engineering factories in Sheffield which then led on naturally to similar resolutions from trade union branches, district committees, trades councils, etc.

> Whether it would be just a Sunday demonstration, or a working day involving industrial action.

In mining, the first major step was a decision by the July 16th meeting of the Yorkshire Area Council of the NUM to throw their industrial muscle behind any Labour Council in the area that opposed the cuts. This policy was then campaigned for throughout the coalfield, with the major role being played by the Union's journal, the *Yorkshire Miner*, which did an extremely effective job of putting the issues to the miners and mobilising support for the campaign.

At the same time, in this early period, based on this 'ground-swell' of activity, informal discussions were going on between many leading figures in the Labour Party and trade union movement on where the campaign should go next. Unity was an important consideration in everyone's mind, and in this period it became necessary to deal with what could have been a divisive diversion. Labour councillor George Wilson, leader of Sheffield Council, had made a statement supporting a proposal from another Labour councillor, Peter Price, to the effect that, if Sheffield Council had to cut anywhere, it would make its cuts

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in the one part of Sheffield that had registered a Tory majority in the election. The local media set out to exploit this to the full. Gordon Ashberry, Sheffield Area Secretary of the Communisty Party, wrote to the local paper defending George Wilson — not defending the actual proposition, which was neither possible nor desirable, but arguing that it was simply a natural and understandable class reaction against what the Tories were doing. Most local workers took the same view and the attempted diversion was thereafter quietly dropped by the media.

Towards the end of this first period, the Sheffield Area Committee of the Party began also to take the battle out into the wider local community with a widespread distribution of local leaflets on the cuts.

In September, after the inevitable holiday lapse, the campaign moved on to a new stage. On the basis of the work already done, a meeting was held on September 12th that was subsequently described by Bill Owen, President of the South Yorkshire Association of Trades Councils, as 'unique — history in the making'. It was in effect a political-industrial conference, bringing together Labour Council leaders, representatives of Labour Parties and Trades Councils, and key leading figures in the trade union movement in South Yorkshire. It did not include, but was lobbied by, several leading convenors, who were allowed into the meeting without speaking rights. But their presence underlined the continuing involvement of the shop floor in the struggle.

The Mass Rally

This meeting decided to call a mass rally in Sheffield City Hall on October 14th, as the key step in mobilising for a mass lobby of Parliament in November. All interested bodies were invited to a preparatory meeting on September 23rd, to plan the campaign — this meeting was more widely representative in some respects than the meeting on the 12th had been, with a number of shop stewards present.

By this time, the annual Trades Union Congress had met (in the first week of September) and had decided in principle on a Day of Action against the cuts. It was clear that the success of the plans for a mass lobby of Parliament could be crucial in deciding both the timing of the TUC's Day of Action, and its character — whether it would be just a Sunday demonstration, or a working day involving industrial action.

The campaign for the October 14th City Hall Rally was on a scale Sheffield has not seen for a long time. 150,000 leaflets, published by the South Yorkshire Association of Trades Councils, were distributed by Labour and Communist Party members and by non-party trade unionists. Intensive loud-speaker meetings with Labour and Communist speakers was carried on round the main shopping centres.

In the event, the October 14th Rally was an historic event. Over 2,500 people attended and the atmosphere was electric. Speeches at the rally stressed the unity that was being built between the trade union movement and the Labour Councils, and the audience rose to Arthur Scargill's call for full support to any local authority that refused to implement the cuts. George Caborn, AUEW District Secretary (and well-known long-standing member of the Communist Party) took a collection of nearly £2,000 for the campaign funds. From the floor — not yet accepted as a 'platform speaker'! — Gordon Ashberry spoke on behalf of the Communist Party Area Committee, the first Communist to speak officially for the *Party* at a Sheffield labour movement rally for over 20 years.

From this high point, the message was taken back into the factories and pits, to the local authority employees, to the local communities, and into the colleges and universities, to win support for the November 28th Lobby.

During the whole period intensive activity against the cuts was going on all over the country, with frequent reports in the *Morning Star* of meetings, demonstrations and lobbies of Council meetings in other areas — notably, the campaign and lobby organised by the Lambeth labour movement. All this helped to give further impetus and encouragement to the campaign in Yorkshire.

The November Lobby

In this general climate, the public announcement of the South Yorkshire call for a November Lobby (reported in the *Morning Star* on September 24th) became the focus for widespread support from other parts of the country. Within a few days declarations of support were coming from many quarters, notably from the secretary of the North West Regional Council of the TUC. By the end of September the Labour Party's national local government sub-committee had decided to ask the Labour Party National Executive to put its weight behind the November 28th Lobby. At the Labour Party Annual Conference in the first week of October, Joan Maynard (MP for Sheffield Brightside), speaking for the Labour Party NEC, urged delegates to mobilise for the Lobby. What had been a South Yorkshire initiative had now become a national event.

This was undoubtedly an important victory, though it would be a mistake not to recognise that it also revealed some problems and negative features. Some unions in the public sector gave the Lobby strong support, but there were others — the NUT, for instance — which might have supported an event organised by the TUC, but would not participate officially in an event sponsored by the Labour Party. And, of course, there was the usual attempt to establish a Labour Party 'monopoly' over the conduct of the event. There were no speakers at the rally other than Labour Party members, these included some like Callaghan whose own record in the 'cutting' field caused an anger at their presence that was entirely understandable, however badly expressed. There was the usual attempt to relegate the banners of 'other political bodies' to an inconspicuous ghetto at the tail end of the demonstration — our Sheffield comrades rightly refused to accept this and carried their banner in the South Yorkshire contingent, along with Labour Party and trade union banners from the region. (The Welsh Committee of the Communist Party acted similarly). Labour's right wing 'supports' such events as these only with the aim of making electoral capital out of them, not with any intention of carrying the movement forward to higher levels of mass action.

But while these problems should not be ignored, the most important thing about the demonstration and Lobby was the tremendous support it received. South Yorkshire's contingent alone numbered at 4,000, including miners and engineers as well as public service workers.

It is important to recognise that, while all this was going on, the fight against the Tories was also being waged on other fronts, which were not seen as 'diversionary' but as all contributing to the same central aim.

For example, a decisive period in winning factory support for the cuts campaign coincided with the engineers' wage struggle, which was waged with considerable militancy and determination in Sheffield (when the GEC management tried a lock-out, the workers occupied the factory and barricaded the gates with an articulated lorry with its tyres let down!). It should surprise no one that the first section of the working class to be won for action in the cuts campaign was the section that was at that very time engaged in fighting for its own 'sectional' interests. It is in the daily struggle to defend and improve their own 'sectional' interests that industrial workers develop the organisation, class feeling and combativity without which they could not lead a broader alliance. The converse is also true. The general 'anti-Tory'

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But it is *not just* to get the Tories out. We do not want a simple return to the 'square one' of 1974.

climate developed in the cuts campaign undoubtedly contributed to the exceptionally high vote of 74% in the Yorkshire coalfield for industrial action on the miners' wage claim.

Another issue on which continuous activity was maintained through this period was the fight against Tory racist legislation. The Sheffield Campaign Against Racism (based on the labour movement, immigrant and black organisations, and a broad spectrum of anti-racist opinion) was continually active, publishing excellent material on the threat of the new Tory legislation. Here, too, it was possible to see how one issue 'rubs off' onto another. Indian, Bengali, West Indian and Yemeni workers, brought together in the first place by SCAR, played an active part in the engineers' strikes. SCAR officially supported the 'cuts' campaign on the grounds that the cuts threatened a number of projects they were directly involved in and that ethnic minorities would be especially hard-hit by the cuts. Sabran Quassim, their spokesman at the October 14th Rally, brought the house down when he declared 'A capitalist is a capitalist whether he is white or black, and a worker is a worker whether he is white or black. We must not let Thatcher's racist policies divide us!'

And, of course, Sheffield engineering workers responded as one would expect them to respond to the victimisation of Derek Robinson, which they see as a 'trial run' for a more widespread attack on militant convenors in general — Communists in particular! This too links up with the cuts campaign, for Tory plans to weaken militant trade union organisation are not aimed only at holding back the wages struggle — they are aimed at making it more difficult for organised workers to exercise their strength in support of progressive policies generally.

4 WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

This, of course, is not just a question for Yorkshire, but for the whole Party and labour movement. Before suggesting some possible answers, I want to outline a general approach to the situation.

Our aim is to get the Tories out — but, it is *not just* to get the Tories out. We do not want a simple return to the 'square one' of 1974; we want a Tory defeat that opens up real possibilities of advance for the Left.

The answer to that problem does not lie wholly — nor even at the present time mainly — in the current struggle to 'democratise' the Labour Party. That is a very important struggle which must receive our full support. But, to be realistic about the speed with which changes take place in the British labour movement, if the next General Election produces a Labour government, it is more likely to be of the 'Callaghan-Healey' type than of the 'Benn-Heffer' type. The prospects of post-electoral advance for the Left depend on the strength and political clarity of the Communist Party, the Left, and the mass movement, *outside* Parliament. (This would of course also be the case though in different circumstances even if the next Labour government were more 'left' than the last one.)

This raises the question of our attitude to the position of Labour's right wing as the movements against the Tories develop. It is bound to participate in phases of the anti-Tory movement, and it would be sectarian indeed not to recognise the positive aspect when movements starting from the grass roots compel official recognition. But there is a negative side. Unless already, now, in the period of anti-Tory struggle, a distinct line is drawn between the position of the right wing and the position of the Left; unless, already, in this period, mass support is won for the position of the Left; then there will be illusions and confusions of an all-too-familiar kind in the aftermath of a Labour election victory.

At the risk of greatly over-simplifying a complex reality, I want to suggest that in the 1970-74 period the Left was more successful in defeating the right wing around the question of how to fight the Tories (industrial action versus parliamentarianism, Council defiance versus constitutionalism) than it was in winning mass support for its left alternative policies. In the present period, the fight to win mass support for the Left against the position of Labour's right wing has to be conducted on both fronts — how to fight the Tories, and what policies are needed after the Tories. On that general background I want to conclude by looking at three aspects of the fight back.

(i) Mass action against the Cuts

Following the Lobby of Parliament the next step must be to raise the movement to the level of industrial action against the cuts, implementing in that form the TUC decision for a Day of Action.

On Saturday, December 8th, the co-ordinating committee of trade union and Labour representatives that had been at the heart of the drive for the Rally and the Lobby met together with a number of shop stewards and decided to press the South Yorkshire Association of Trades Councils to organise a 24 hour strike on Monday, February 18th. It was clearly hoped that this initiative from South Yorkshire might lead to national action on that date, just as the Lobby had become a national event.

While there have been some positive responses from outside Yorkshire to this proposal, the TUC General Council has decided to go for a Day of Action on May 14th. While labour movement activists in South Yorkshire welcomed the fact that the General Council had settled on a working day for the Day of Action, it was widely felt that

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May 14th was too late to carry forward the impetus and inspiration of the November 28th Lobby. It was also felt that the Day of Action should be before, not after, polling day in the local elections, so that it could be part of a great national campaign to sweep the Tories off the Councils on May 1st.

This thinking no doubt influenced the South Yorkshire Association of Trades Councils at its meeting on Saturday, January 5th to decide unanimously to work for a 24 hour strike on February 18th. This article having been written in December and marginally updated on January 6th, obviously cannot forecast how events will work out between now and publication in February. But whatever the detailed working out of events in the next few weeks, it will remain the case that the key to defeating Tory policies is determined action by the organised industrial working class, backed up by the broader community. There are two things here we need to bear in mind:

First — we cannot take it for granted that the pledges won for industrial action some months ago are good for ever. The workers who made those pledges are faced with the corrosive effects of press propaganda, weaknesses of leadership, and mounting redundancies. We therefore cannot take anything for granted but need continually to go back to the factory floor to maintain the positions won last summer.

Second — the aim is to get broad community involvement in the struggle; but we have found problems in bringing 'community organisations' outside the traditional labour movement into the struggle. Indeed, there has been some resistance from some Labour and trade union leaders to involving the widest possible range of community organisations in the movement. In part this stems from the self-confidence of a powerful labour movement so sure of its own strength that it under-rates the importance of allies; in part it stems from a kind of 'Labour Party sectarianism' — an anxiety to assert Labour Party hegemony over the movement.

(ii) The Role of Labour Councils

I have already explained why we did not from the start demand a commitment from Labour Councils not to implement the cuts. We took the view that, before 'non-implementation' could become a real issue, Councils had to see visible evidence of a real movement, with real power, outside the council chamber, that could back them up.

As the movement develops; as Tory policies begin to bite; and as the local elections approach — it now becomes more urgent to consider this question in concrete terms. There are many real and serious difficulties, and a substantial body of labour movement opinion does not see 'non-implementation' as practical politics, given the array of financial and other weapons at the disposal of the Government. This attitude cannot be written off as simply 'right-wing treachery'. True, there *are* right-wing Labour councillors with no stomach for any kind of struggle. But there are also many sincere Labour councillors, with a genuine pride in their social service record and a real willingness to defend it, who find difficulty in seeing how to deal with the situation they are now in. As they see it, the alternatives are: refuse to implement the cuts and face crushing burdens on the rates; resign rather than implement the cuts; or do what they can to protect their local services short of actual defiance of the Government, and try to 'weather the storm' until a General Election leads to a change of government.

If we are serious as a Party about the policy of 'non-implementation', it is now urgent for us to consider what, exactly, concretely, we are asking Labour Councils to do; what exactly, concretely, our Communist candidates will advocate in their campaigns for the local elections; what will be the likely consequences of that course of action and how we would cope with them.

If and when local authorities — including Labour Councils, however well meaning — begin to implement the cuts, there will be opposition and resistance, both from families affected by the cuts and from workers employed in those services. We could not possibly do anything other than participate in such struggles — indeed, we should encourage them. But if we are to do so with any credibility, we must have some better advice to offer Labour Councils than just that 'if only' all local authorities stood together the Tories would have to retreat.

(iii) The Cuts Campaign and Broader Political Issues.

At the present time there is not *one* 'anti-Tory movement'; there are a number of separate anti-Tory movements going on, on different issues, and this is likely to continue to be the case for some time. It would be premature at this time to try to bring all these movements under one umbrella. Not all the people who oppose cuts are equally opposed to legislation to limit picketing; not all who oppose racist immigration laws are equally opposed to the Corrie Bill; not all who oppose the Corrie Bill support the wages struggle.

Nevertheless, we have to look ahead and consider how to gradually build one united movement out of these streams of struggle. The character of the present separate movements is that each is primarily a defensive response to one or another aspect of the Tory attack; the character of a united movement must surely be that it is primarily an offensive movement built around a positive alternative to Tory policies, a positive alternative for which people in each of the separate movements have been won. Even more than arguments over 'how' to fight the Tories, it is this fight for a positive alternative that will also draw the line clearly between right and left in the labour movement.

This does not mean that we should try to impose on the various present movements demands which the participants are not yet prepared to accept; that is the divisive tactic of the ultra-left. It does mean, however, a much greater effort to combine our participation in the anti-Tory movements with the fight to win understanding of the support for our alternative economic policy. This is necessary even for the advance of the present cuts campaign. People who accept the Tory version of Britain's economic problems may not like the cuts, but they will accept them as unpleasant necessities. Both from the point of view of developing the movement *now*, and from the longer-term view of creating conditions for one broad united stream of struggle against the Tories and for a left alternative policy, it is now more than ever necessary to argue more vigorously for our alternative analysis of Britain's economic problems and our alternative policy to deal with them. Nothing could more forcefully underline that necessity than the accelerating pace of de-industrialisation, an issue that is now right at the centre of British politics.

5 CONCLUSION

Most of the lessons I would want to draw from the experiences of the past few months are clearly enough stated in the course of the article. Only one would I want to re-emphasise in conclusion — the essential role of the Communist Party.

Many different labour movement individuals and organisations contributed to the development of the struggle against the cuts, and no single one of them could claim the sole credit. At no time in these struggles has the Communist Party sought or expected 'an exclusive position of leadership', and if we had the movement could not possibly have developed as it did. But Communists did give leadership and did exercise initiative, and that did play a vital role in the struggle. Above all, what our experiences underline is the supreme importance of the Party's organised roots in industry and in the labour movement. Without them, the strategy of the *British Road to Socialism* would be an academic exercise of no more value than any of the other rival left-wing strategies toted around by a variety of left groupings. But with those roots, the strategy can come to life. □

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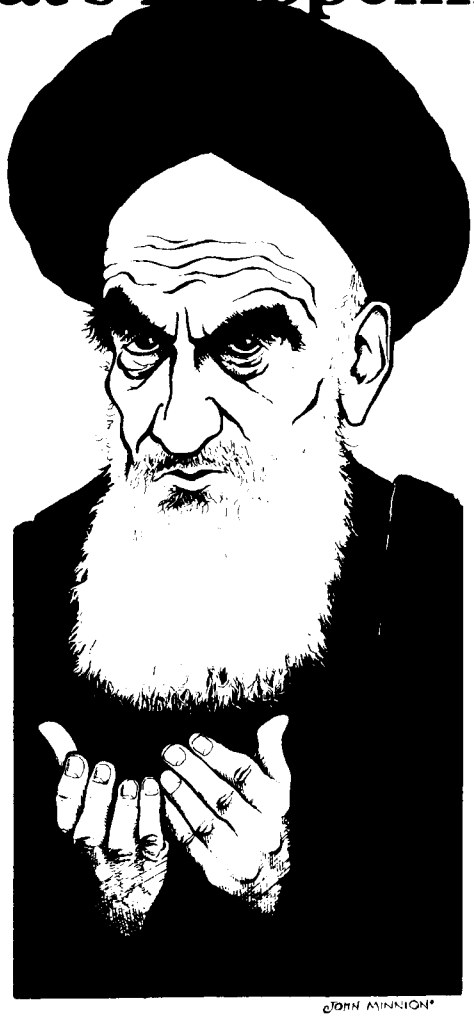
Joanna de Groot

The Iranian Revolution: What's Happening?



Looking at developments in Iran since the Shah left, a year ago, many people have been confused and distressed to see the mass movement which overthrew his regime itself become dominated by repressive policies and leaders. Many others have merely been confirmed in the view that the religious and nationalist aspects of that movement made it 'reactionary' from the start, with events over the last year reinforcing their hostility to the forces which opposed the Shah and foreign domination. While both of these views have some basis in reality, they do not go very far to *explain* the present situation in Iran. In this article I shall try to look at the kind of problems facing Iran, the nature of particular changes in the state and the economy, and the failure of the anti Shah movement to become a movement for progressive social and political change. I hope that this will go beyond whatever disappointment or dislike there is of aspects of the Iranian situation in order to grasp some of the reasons for what is happening.

Before beginning a discussion of the current situation it is worth recalling some of the more important features of Iranian society. In a previous article (*Marxism Today* April 1979) I pointed out the complex variety of that society. On the one hand it is characterised by an ethnic and linguistic diversity such that Persian is the first language of only half the Iranian population. Long established groups of Kurds in Western Iran, Azeri Turks to the northwest, and Arabs in the oil-rich area of Khuzistan to the southwest, together with Baluch and Turcic groups, are part of a *social* complexity that is also very important politically. Differences of language, culture and religion inspire demands for regional rights and even autonomy that are very real for the new regime, as will be seen. This ethnic diversity is paralleled by social and economic complications arising from the partial and uneven nature of capitalist development in Iran. Modern manufacturing and business enterprises co-exist with older patterns of bazaar manufacture and trade, the failure of the Shah's regime to develop the economy created large numbers of unassimilated and underemployed rural migrants in towns, while the demands of the state also created an army of clerks, bureaucrats and other white-collar workers.

The revolt against the Shah's regime was the product of the social and economic discontent of a society facing inflation, lack of investment in productive activity *or* social welfare, and general political repression. The urban poor revolted against harsh deprivation and corruption, the small craft producers and traders of the bazaar against foreign competition and the big business interests favoured by the Shah and foreign interests, while students and professionals opposed the repression and lack of opportunity provided by a regime that spent more on armaments and security than on *all* social or economic programmes put together. The common link between sections of all these groups was a tradition of religious politics that brought opposition to tyranny, desire for social progress, and commitment to the indigenous culture and society *against* foreign 'imperialist' intervention. This tradition had fuelled progressive movements taking up these issues for nearly a century and even the rise of secular progressive politics, especially in the 1940s and 1950s, had not eradicated it. The mosque as a centre for collective solidarity, protest and ideas, and the religious classes with their tradition of moral protest against the state and leadership or protection of the poor were thus the focus for the anti Shah movement.

The negative character of the movement

A fundamental problem for Iranians after the overthrow of the Shah was the *negative* character of their movement. People knew well enough what they opposed, but were (and are) unclear or divided as to what they supported in its place. Thus the Shah's departure marked a clear break with the past without any correspondingly clear commitment to a particular direction for Iran's future. The mass basis for opposition to the old regime was not matched by consensus or unity about desirable social or political changes. As has been said, the only common denominator for most people was the heritage of religious solidarity reinforcing demands

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for national independence which linked the urban poor, small producers and traders and the religious hierarchy. The deep roots of this tradition and its close and long association with political struggles in a culture where secular political tradition is weak give it considerable popular force. This force re-emerged to political prominence from 25 years of repression during which ordinary Iranians had no chance to develop or modify the tradition through new political experiences. Thus the popular movement was influenced by a range of deeply felt but very limited views, untouched by the tests of debate and struggle.

With this situation in mind it is easier to understand, not only the popular support for the religious leaders of the movement, but also the limits to the development of popular political discussion. These in turn have meant that contradictions within the Iranian tradition of religious politics have emerged only slowly and are certainly nowhere near resolution. It is vital to understand the depth and reality of these contradictions if we are to grasp the political confusions facing many Iranians. On the one hand these deep religious and nationalist loyalties inspire anti-imperialist and popular politics concerned to liberate Iranian society from tyranny and foreign oppression and to improve it on the basis of human dignity and social justice. On the other hand the same loyalties inspire the repressive defence of conservative and chauvinist values which justifies the repression of women, of the non-Persian ethnic groups and of left wing political activity. Both these elements co-exist or intermingle uneasily, and one of the current features of the Iranian situation is the lack of clear attempts to separate the two trends — itself perhaps the mark of lack of political experience.

The Islamic State

These confusions and conflicts can clearly be seen if we look at the nature of the new 'Islamic' state and the way it attempts to deal with ethnic and social questions. The constitution enshrines various concepts derived from religious tradition and in particular the writings of Ayatollah Khomeini himself. It makes an original departure when it defines the status of the *mustaz 'afin* — those whose weakness should be protected by society — reflecting a commitment to social responsibility and concern for the poor. At the same time it defines the position of women in relation to an abstract 'Islamic' ideal (glorified motherhood) rather than to their actual situation or to the damands now being made by women's groups in Iran. Thus the 'equality before the law' proclaimed by the constitution means very little, especially seen in conjunction with 'Islamic' restrictions on female inheritance and divorce rights, and the annulment of the 1968 Family Protection Law which had made a start at giving women some rights to civil divorce and custody of children. Most crucial of all the constitution gives religious leadership a central role in a way which goes against not only secular views of politics, but also a section of religious opinion which argues for greater separation of religion and politics along the lines of the constitutional tradition going back to the first great popular anti-imperialist constitutional movement of 1906-11 (which also had religious support).

One exponent of this critical view of 'Khomeini's constitution' is another Ayatollah — Shariat-Madari — who in fact played a leading role in opposition to the Shah while Khomeini was in exile abroad and who has considerable following. What is significant about his position is that it represents not just rivalry between two ayatollahs, but a real political difference in which Shariat-Madari's view can claim as much 'legitimacy' and precedent as that of Khomeini. Support for Shariat-Madari is based on this less fundamentalist view of religion and politics and has attracted members of the traditionally religious (and 'constitutional') craft and trader community as well as members of the modern intelligentsia. However the other basis for his supporters is regional since he is an Azeri from the northwest who can command local loyalty. Azerbaijan (the Azeri province) is characterised by having its own local language (Azeri), considerable prosperity based on good agricultural areas and the substantial commercial and manufacturing city of Tabriz, and a long tradition of progressive politics going back to the days when Azeris were part of the most democratic wing of the constitutional movement before the First World War.

The ethnic minorities

Support for Shariat-Madari reflects not only the general conflicts over the nature of religion and the state in Iran, but also the specific problem of how Iranian 'nationalism' can deal with the important ethnic minorities of Iran. The demands of Azeri's and Arabs for linguistic rights and of the Kurds for political autonomy are ones which the current leadership, based as it is on Persian speakers and Shi'a Islam, finds unacceptable. Concepts of Muslim brotherhood and national rights which are one part of the Iranian movement conflict with hostility to Sunni Muslims (like the Kurds and Turcoman) and to the regional and cultural aspirations of diverse elements in Iranian society (Kurds, Azeris, Arabs, Baluch, Turcoman) which is also part of the religious nationalist tradition. Where these groups have economic importance as with the Arab presence near the oilfields or the role of rich Turcoman cotton farmers in the north-east, the new state is willing to take repressive action, seen at its most extreme in the military operations and ferocious 'justice' used against the Kurds, who have their own long tradition of struggle for autonomy. Thus the notion of an 'Islamic state' based on equality within the community is flawed by strong tendencies to repress some aspirations within the community — justified by reference to Islamic precedent.

Such developments reflect the continuing importance of religious loyalties within society at large, which means that many Iranians look to their version of Islam to change the society created under the Shah into something better. However they also reflect the conflicting implications of religion, and the dominance of a conservative rather than a progressive view of religion and society. The existence of the latter is shown by the considerable support for criticisms of the new state which has developed in organisations like the Muslim Republican Party in Azerbaijan (which backs Shariat-Madari). Such people boycotted the constitution, along with both marxist and muslim guerrillas and secular parties like the National Front (descended from the old radical nationalist movement) and the National Democratic Front. The real question is why this trend has not been stronger in challenging the popularity of Khomeini's simplistic conservatism, which has come to prevail as public orthodoxy.

The progressive forces

Any real alternative to that orthodoxy would need to be based on an effective alliance between secular and religious progressives which has failed to materialise. Many secular progressives have been cut off from any mass audience both by the divisive repression of the Shah's era, which prevented them from arguing their views, and also by the fact that they have not put those views in terms which will get across to ordinary people. The National Democratic Front, which began as an attempt to bring together all kinds of progressives, gradually moved towards the guerrilla groups and so came to speak for a narrow rather than a broad range of opinion. Those secular progressives who see the importance of being part of a broad movement, and hence of co-operating with religious activists, have sometimes seemed insufficiently critical of the conservative repressive aspect of religion. It is perhaps difficult to understand why the Tudeh Party, which rightly emphasises

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the need to support a broad democratic and anti-imperialist political force, is more critical of Shariat-Madari than of Khomeini — particularly when its own existence is by no means secure under the present regime.

The fragmentation of the progressive forces made it all the easier for the conservatives to move against them last summer, closing down newspapers and organisations, harassing activists and denouncing 'anti-Islamic' activity. Since then it has been hard for progressives to put across their views let alone to organise effectively. This is probably less true for the Tudeh party which is not actually banned and has more of a disciplined organised base among professional and white-collar workers and among the small elite of oil workers. Naturally the religious character of this attack on the political rights of the Left has not encouraged the development of links between secular and religious progressives. It should also be said that the success of the conservative offensive has made it even harder than before to get accurate or detailed information about what is happening and so to judge it properly. What is clear is that there is a great need for the development of grassroots political debate and activity which can embrace religious and secular issues in a progressve way.

Economic background

However it makes little sense to discuss the dominance of Khomeini or the problems of progressives in Iran without putting them into a wider political and economic context. The upheaval of 1978 was a reaction against a regime which not only repressed political opposition and denied basic human rights, but also acted as the agent of international capitalist interests in oil and commerce, and of an unequal internal class structure. As we have seen the regime presided over economic stagnation and growing dependence on food imports, over inflation and urban poverty, over corruption and huge armaments purchases, all of which contributed to the grievances which brought people to oppose it. Again the unity in opposition to the economic oppressions of the old regime contrasts with lack of agreement about economic alternatives, as about political alternatives. This conflict is reflected in the current economic situation and government responses to it (or lack thereof). The 'nationalisation' of banks, factories and urban land has not gone along with real government control of economic planning. Worker participation co-exists uneasily with government intervention in the manufacturing sector, just as the supposedly revolutionary local *komitehs* (= committees) are being used by self seeking expropriators of property or local powerful landlords defending their interests.

In a situation where Iranians desperately need economic policies and plans to overcome the problems of industry and agriculture starved of investment, skills and technology, the absence of effective government intervention for these purposes is significant. Talk of an 'Islamic economy' cannot overcome Iran's dependence on oil exports and food imports (hence the relevance of Carter's threatened sanctions against Iran), nor the heavy price paid by ordinary people for falling productivity and continued inflation. Khomeini's virulent anti-American propaganda campaign, which finds a ready response among those who rightly oppose the role of the US government, is in fact a diversionary *political* gambit, concealing the inability of those who think like him to produce helpful answers to the pressing issues facing the Iranian economy. Slogans of economic nationalism, and the personal asceticism of the religious leadership may appeal to many religious small entrepreneurs who support Khomeini, but they provide little practical benefit even for them. For others, lack of planning or investment or even efficient administration is a cause of real hardship.

The overthrow of the Shah unleashed diverse forces with diverse aspirations, ranging from urban workers attempting to share in management and profits in the workplaces to business and professional people trying to win favour with the politically dominant ayatollahs. On the one hand there are conflicts between government and workers in some workplaces which indicate attempts to repress workers' demands. On the other hand there is also evidence of continued support for the regime among ordinary people. The genuine nationalist fervour of the regime's pronouncements give it continued credibility, as does its maintenance of food supplies to the urban poor. In the chaotic situation where the flight of foreign and local businessmen and capital overlays the long term problems of slow economic development it must seem simpler for Iranians to focus on the 'American menace' as the source of all wrongs than to grapple with the real complexities of the situation. Coherent arguments about economic alternatives have made little impact on a mass audience, so that it is not surprising that traditional religious and anti-imperialist slogans are more acceptable.

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US interests

Iran's economic problems derive not only from the internal stresses which grew during the Shah's era and remain afterwards, but also from Iran's dependent role in the international capitalist system. As a source of oil, as a market for industrial goods, food and armaments, and as a borrower of foreign capital, Iran has been tied to that system at many levels. The collapse of the Shah's regime challenged the existing interests of foreign governments and companies, a fact reflected in the hostility of the western media towards the new regime and the popular movement. However, whatever the new possibilities for changing Iran's relationship to advanced industrial countries, many ties remain essential to the survival of its economy. Government pressure to revive Iran's oil production and negotiations for foreign loans and contracts followed logically from this fact. What effect this will have on western policies towards Iran is another question, since the end of the Shah's regime means more to the west than the disruption of trade and oil supplies.

The economic interests of America (or Britain) in Iran have always been intimately linked to more strategic international interests. The US government backed the Shah not only as an oil supplier, but also as an agent of US policies in the Middle East, and his removal was a real threat to American attempts to stage-manage settlements or prop up regimes in the area. The emergence of effective popular resistance to the Shah and the American interests he supported is not an example American governments would wish to see followed elsewhere. Whatever the content or credibility of Khomeini's current assertions about American spying there can be little doubt that the US government is pursuing policies which will safeguard its interests in Iran. It has already given aid to the military repression of the Kurds, presumably reckoning that weakening of Iran central government is not desirable. More generally American hostility towards an 'unco-operative' Iranian regime is a continuing background threat, and the possibility of American intervention very real.

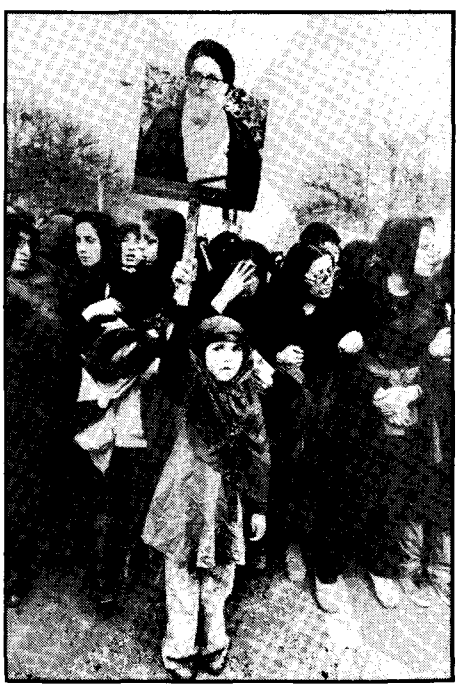
In such circumstances it is all the more pity that US interests have been given a moral lever by the seizure of hostages (endorsed by the government), when the moral advantage could have been with the Iranians in their opposition to the provocative sheltering of the Shah, had they used better tactics. As with other issues we have discussed, a simplistic fundamentalist approach which finds widespread popular support since it draws on deep and justified anti-American feeling, is in fact a positive threat to any progressive solution to Iran's international problems. At best it has reduced the sympathy of outsiders towards the Iranian situation, and at worst it creates the danger of a serious confrontation in which Iranians stand little chance of success, and where the overthrow of the present regime could be made to seem acceptable. Behind the short-term melodrama of the hostages lies the deep long-term problem of reshaping Iran's links with the wider world in such a way as to liberate it from dependency. Again the present leadership has substituted short-sighted gestures for any adequate approach, let alone answer to that problem.

Conclusions

Whether we consider the creation of a new political order, the development of economic life or the re-structuring of Iran's international relations, we return to the impasse from which we started. The strength of the popular movement in Iran and the religious leaders to whom it gives loyalty was measured by the *opposition* they mounted against the Shah and their *rejection* of the old order of police tyranny and foreign oppression. Popular opinion and experience were shaped by resistance to that order rather than by struggles for an alternative, giving rise to strongly *negative* interpretations of anti-imperialism, of national development or of social change. The capacity for *positive* politial action to construct better alternatives has been limited partly by the real difficulties facing any dependent society trying to break out of the traps of unequal power and development, partly by the political vacuum created around popular politics by decades of repression. In that vacuum the known and trusted simplicities of deep rooted religious tradition have been able to establish dominance without much challenge, legitimised by the genuine contribution they have made to former struggles. The problem of any would-be challenge is to debate the issues posed by religious conservatism without doing so in such a way as to be cut off from potential participants in that debate. Elitist anti-clericalism is not enough.

Perhaps one should consider that the very negative character of the present Government will eventually reveal its inadequacy to meet the needs and aspirations of those who support it at present. If the Government has no policies to deal with unemployment, economic stagnation and inflation, or to meet demands for regional and ethnic rights, or to provide basic services, then it will be failing in areas which concern ordinary people very closely. In such a situation the question is in what direction people will turn as they lose confidence in a leadership which fails to provide for them. A year ago I agrued that the political vacuum just mentioned needed to be filled by debate, experiment and organisation, through which people's political experience and confidence would increase, and become the basis for more advanced political discussion and struggle. What has in fact happened in the last year is something of a stagnation of political development, disappointing perhaps for those who looked for swift progress, but not surprising in the light of the factors that have been described.

Perhaps one should also take account of the signs of change which can be found, especially if one turns from the national scene which tends to monopolise the attention of commentators. In some areas women have been working to spread literacy and political confidence among their sisters in the rural areas, carefully linking their work to broad based religious arguments for the emancipation of women. In Azerbaijan political contacts are bringing religious constitutionalists and modern intellectuals together to criticise fundamentalism. Such developments face resistance and harassment and their influence is as yet limited, but they are signs of at least the possibility of progressive change. The threats to such change are very great, not least from the great power rivalries that may make the Iranian situation along with that in Afghanistan a threat to world peace. If such threats can be avoided (a matter partly beyond Iranian control) then it still seems to be a question of a long period of time to develop the forces which could move forward from the negative achievements of the past to positive achievements in the future. □



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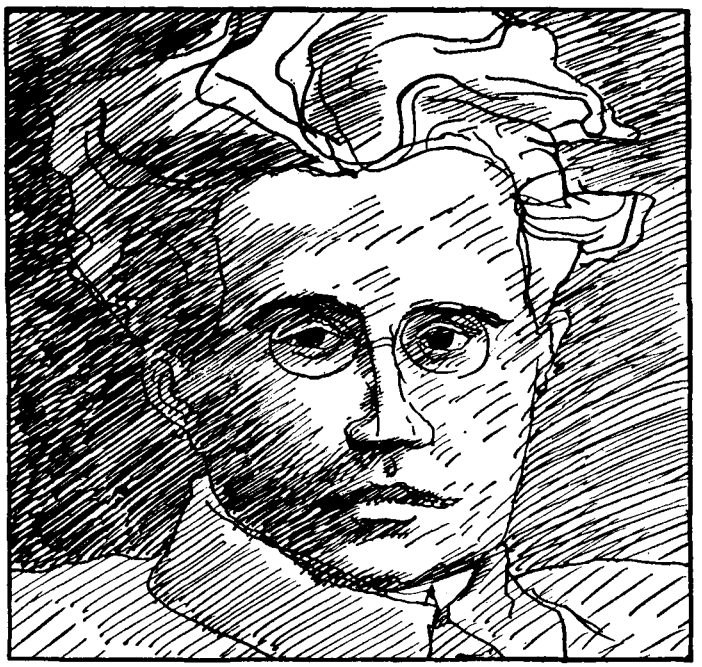
Bob Jessop

The Gramsci Debate

Assimilating Gramsci is a key aspect in the renewal of the Left



It is a commonplace nowadays that Marxism is in crisis. Theoretically this is apparent in the disintegration of the old orthodoxies and the failure to fill the resulting vacuum with more fruitful analyses; politically it is evident in the inability of socialist and popular-democratic forces to build upon the current crisis in capitalism as well as in the problems of 'actually existing socialism'. Without wishing to suggest that theoretical incapacity alone could have produced this crisis, the connection between its theoretical and political moments is implied in Lenin's dictum that there can be no revolution without revolutionary theory. The current crisis is thus both theoretical and practical. This is certainly reflected in the position of the Left in Britain. On the theoretical plane we find a number of responses ranging from a radical attack on the foundations of Marxist political economy in the name of an abstract discourse theory and a practical socialist politics (eg, Hindess and Hirst) to a spirited onslaught on Marxist theoretical practice as a whole by those who proclaim the poverty of theory and the potential analytical fruitfulness of historical research and personal experience (eg, E P Thompson).On the political plane we find a partial retreat from the turn towards right Eurocommunism and a continuing inability of left Eurocommunism to create a broad popular-democratic, socialist bloc embracing movements as diverse as the Labour Party, feminism, and ecological groups. This points to the need for a regeneration of Marxism and new solutions to the old question of 'what is to be done?'

In this pessimistic intellectual climate, one name stimulates a certain optimism of political will: that of the justly celebrated Italian communist, Antonio Gramsci. This is hardly surprising. For Gramsci was himself actively involved in an attempt to resolve an equally significant crisis in Marxism during the twenties and thirties. It is increasingly in this context that the work of Gramsci is now considered. Indeed it has even been suggested that we are now witnessing a new phase in the development of Marxist theory following a period of Althusserianism in the sixties: the phase of 'Gramscism' (Mouffe, 1979, p1). However, whilst this remark points to the growing theoretical and political interest in Gramsci as an innovative Marxist intellectual and leading protagonist of socialist revolution in the West, it does not indicate the precise nature of this new theoretical current. For there are almost as many ways of appropriating Gramsci as there are socialist tendencies. In the thirty years or so that Gramsci's prison writings have been widely available, we have encountered the libertarian Gramsci, the Stalinist Gramsci, the social democratic Gramsci, the Togliattian Gramsci, the Trotskyist Gramsci, right and left Eurocommunist Gramscis, and, recently, Gramsci as discourse theorist. Whilst it would be entertaining to pursue the somewhat elusive 'pure' Gramsci, it is surely more important to ask how the current uses of Gramsci can contribute to resolving the present crisis in Marxism. To this end it is worth considering two new works on Gramsci as a political theorist but we shall first comment on the prison letters of Gramsci himself.

The Letters

For those confined to the English language the appropriation of Gramsci has been marked by an extremely uneven development. This is due not only to the belated translation of the prison notebooks (as yet both incomplete and thematic in nature) and the even more belated translation of Gramsci's most important earlier political writings; but also to the continuing inaccessibility of the lively and stimulating Gramsci debate in France as well as Italy. This is not to deny the virtues of various English-language intellectual and political biographies (especially the studies by Cammett, 1967, and Davidson, 1977) but simply to recall that they do not engage to any great extent, if at all, in this particular debate. It is for this reason that one must give a much stronger and warmer welcome to the recently published works of Buci-Glucksmann and Mouffe than to the new paperback edition of Gramsci's prison letters. Over ninety of these letters (about a fifth of the total now know to be extant) have been translated, annotated, and introduced by Lynne Lawner and, thanks to Quartet, are now available in a reasonably priced paperback. However, whilst the prison letters provide further evidence of Gramsci's refusal to be crushed intellectually as well as physically by his years in incarceration — his refusal to 'let go the threads of life', it must be conceded that their theoretical and political importance is slight in comparison with the prison notebooks themselves or, to take a parallel example, the correspondence of Marx and Engels. The letters offer certain indications as to the development of Gramsci's theoretical and political concerns, certain formulations on significant conceptual issues such as the nature of hegemony, certain conclusions on such themes as the role of Croce in Italian political culture; and, as Buci-Glucksmann, for example, shows, they can be made to reveal some interesting points about the theoretical revolution achieved by Gramsci during the prison years. But the letters are basically human documents whose significance is inspirational and literary rather than systematic and theoretical. Moreover, whilst this particular edition has a useful and readable introduction as well as extensive notes, it

Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980) xvii + 470pp, £14.00; Chantal Mouffe, ed., *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979) viii + 288pp, £5.95; and Antonio Gramsci, *Letters from Prison*, selected, translated, and introduced by Lynne Lawner (London: Quartet, 1979) pp292, £3.95.

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should also be noted that a wider selection of the letters is available in the edition produced under the aegis of *The New Edinburgh Review* (1974). This said we can now turn to two studies emerging from the Gramsci debate itself.

Gramsci and the State

It is a pleasure to welcome the new translation of Christine Buci-Glucksmann's major French text on *Gramsci and the State*. Originally published in 1975, it now appears in English with a fresh introduction. It provides one of the most original and important interpretations of the political thought of Gramsci and should stimulate critical comment on a wide range of topics. Buci-Glucksmann argues that Gramsci's role as a political leader of the workers' movement cannot be fully grasped without referring to the specifically theoretical and philosophical dimensions of his revolutionary practice. Accordingly she presents a 'theoretical-political' reading organised around three main themes: the appropriate revolutionary strategy for socialist transition in the West, the role of culture as a dimension of politics — hegemony as moral and intellectual as well as political leadership, and Gramsci's contribution to Marxist philosophy. These three themes are unified through her concern with Gramsci's analysis of the state, which Buci-Glucksmann sees as the key to all his work. Thus, in contrast to those accounts which focus more or less exclusively on Gramsci's discoveries concerning intellectuals, hegemony, the revolutionary party, and so on, this text argues that Gramsci's views on such matters are only intelligible in relation to the 'immense theoretical revolution' involved in his enlarged concept of the state and its implications for political strategy. There can be no adequate theory of intellectuals, for example, without a theory of hegemonic state apparatuses and their articulation with the integral state. Much of her analysis is therefore concerned with the methodological duplication of the state apparatus and the moments of state power: with political society and civil society, dictatorship and hegemony, the repressive apparatus and apparatuses of hegemony, state in the narrow sense of government and the broad sense of hegemony protected by the armour of coercion, state as apparatus of power and as organiser of consent, domination and leadership. This analysis is linked in turn to an investigation into the historic bases of different forms of state in terms of the organisation of their social bases of support and the relations of force that sustain them. And this is related to such important strategic issues as war of position, passive revolution, and socialist transition. In analysing these aspects of Gramsci's state theory Buci-Glucksmann pays careful attention to his comparative historical analyses and emphasises the theoretical and political significance of his studies of Fordism and fascism as well as those concerned with the growth of the Italian liberal state. In all this she also highlights the specifically philosophical dimension of Gramsci's work — arguing that Gramsci's historicism is best understood in terms of his original preliminary contributions to a 'gnoseology of politics'. Throughout a wide-ranging and thorough account Buci-Glucksmann is always concerned to relate Gramsci's political thought to his role as a political leader and to contemporary issues in political theory. Thus, in addition to considering his intellectual and political development from the factory council movement of the *biennio rosso* through his period of leadership of the early PCI to his fatal period of incarceration, she also locates his work in relation to that of Lenin and other communists (eg, Stalin, Lukacs, Trotsky, Bukharin, and Togliatti) and to other leading contemporary political theorists (especially Croce, Gentile, and Sorel). In this context she emphasises Gramsci's continuity with Lenin as well as his remarkable theoretical innovations within the Marxist-Leninist tradition. In short Buci-Glucksmann offers an important interpretation of Gramsci's political thought and points beyond this to a left Eurocommunist strategy based on that interpretation.

> For those confined to the English language the appropriation of Gramsci has been marked by an extremely uneven development.

Gramsci and Marxist Philosophy

Buci-Glucksmann's analysis of the Gramscian theory of the state will be particularly welcome because it is comprehensive and closely related to strategic questions. Her own commitments in this respect emerge quite clearly in the discussion of war of position and the need for an 'anti-passive revolution'. But equally significant is her account of Gramsci's contribution to Marxist philosophy. For, whilst Buci-Glucksmann rightly stresses his critique of economism and mechanical materialism as central elements in Gramsci's view of historical materialism, she also presents a novel interpretation of the positive content of his philosophical work. She argues that, from 1930 onwards, Gramsci approached the state in both political and philosophical terms. Gramsci emphasised the political nature of philosophy, its character as a superstructural moment, its link with the apparatus of philosophical hegemony, its materialisation in everyday life as well as the abstract, contemplative thought of high philosophy. He argued that hegemony goes beyond political leadership to encompass leadership in the fields of science, morality, and philosophy; and that the transition to socialism would therefore require the creation of a new common sense, a new culture, a new philosophy that is adapted to the new civilisation. In this context Buci-Glucksmann introduces a claim that Gramsci developed a 'gnoseology of politics', ie, a dialectical account of the effects of philosophy in all practices, including those of everyday life, together with the knowledge effects, including philosophical knowledge, involved in these practices. It must be admitted that her arguments here are sometimes as enigmatic as her sources in Gramsci's notebooks but their overall thrust is clear and is well illustrated in the analysis of Gramsci's 'anti-Croce'. For it is in this critique of Crocean philosophy and its political implications that Gramsci most clearly adumbrates the approach reconstructed after the fashion of Althusser in Buci-Glucksmann's work. Whether Gramsci's analyses will bear the weight of this interpretation is questionable and it is also far from certain what precise strategic implications follow from such a 'gnoseology'. But with this one major exception, itself bound to generate further comment, Buci-Glucksmann has provided us with a model of theoretical criticism.

The Italian and French Debates

Chantal Mouffe has also performed a valuable service in collecting and introducing some critical assessments of Gramsci as a political theorist. For, although his most important political writings have been available in English for some time, there has been a dearth of readily accessible Italian and French criticism. This problem has now been remedied in part with the appearance of *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*. In her introduction Mouffe traces the resurgence of interest in Gramsci to the crisis of historicism in the PCI after 1956 (to which one might well add the more general difficulties confronting Marxism in the aftermath of Stalin) and also reviews the current status of the Gramsci debate. This is followed by eight essays on Gramsci as a political theorist, arranged in three groups dealing respectively with his views on superstructures and civil society, philosophy and hegemony, and the state and revolutionary strategy. The first group

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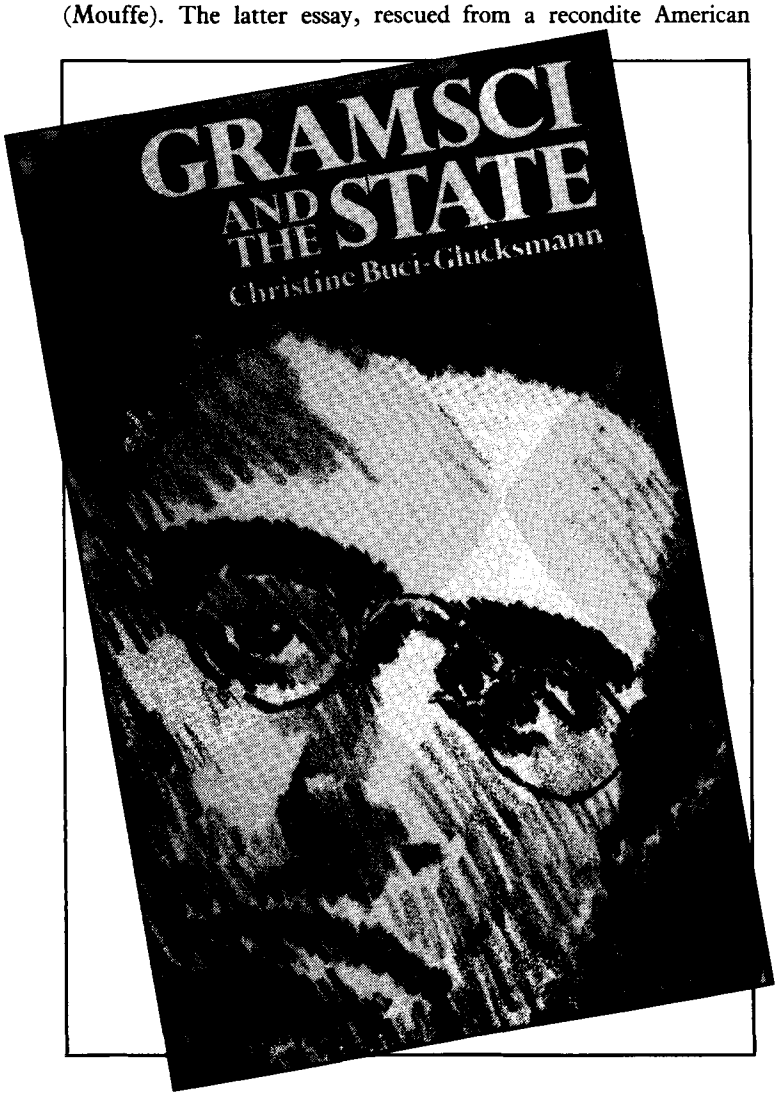
His work can be appropriated in various ways to help solve the theoretical and political difficulties involved in the current crisis of Marxism.

includes the well-known Bobbio-Texier debate. This established a 'superstructuralist' problematic concerned with the extent to which Gramsci attributed causal primacy to civil society over political society and to both moments of the superstructure over the economic system (Bobbio) or, alternatively, retained the Marxist commitment to economic determination in the last instance and simply rounded out historical materialism by concentrating on the superstructural moment of the social whole (Texier). This group also includes a complex and thorough analysis of Gramsci's relation to such critics of Marxism as Sorel, Croce, and Bernstein in an attempt to determine his originality as a theorist of revolution (Badaloni). There follows a second group of two essays dealing with Gramsci's contribution to Marxist philosophy. One stresses his creation of an anti-economistic and non-positivistic 'general theory' in which due weight is given to the ethico-political moment and to Marxism as a guide to action (Paggi); the other argues that Gramsci broke decisively with economism not only in its strong form of epiphenomenalism but also in its weak form of class reductionism and thereby provided the theoretical preconditions for an original and productive analysis of ideology and hegemony as political, intellectual, and moral leadership (Mouffe). The latter essay, rescued from a recondite American journal rather than from an Italian or French source, is particularly stimulating. For, not only does it provide an incisive critique of class reductionism in the analysis of ideologies, it also offers a preliminary account of a non-reductionist approach to the question of their class nature. The collection concludes with three essays on revolutionary strategy. Thus Buci-Glucksmann develops a novel interpretation of Gramsci's views on the 'war of position' and argues that, whereas the bourgeoisie seeks to consolidate its hegemony through a 'war of position' which permits the reorganisation of social relations at the same time as maintaining the passivity of the masses, a socialist transition demands a 'war of position' that mobilises the people and so achieves an 'anti-passive revolution'. Then, following a short essay by Salvadori on the contrasting conceptions of hegemony found in Gramsci's work and the PCI's reformist strategy, a selection from de Giovani argues that Gramsci developed a new theory of the party to correspond to the changed nature of the state in the era of state monopoly capitalism. This collection merits a wide audience not only on account of its overall aim of providing a guide to the main lines of interpretation of Gramsci's political theory but also because of the high quality and continuing significance of the essays by Mouffe, Buci-Glucksmann, and de Giovani.



Relevance to Our Political Problems

It is hoped that this necessarily cursory review of the two texts on Gramsci has shown the contemporary significance of his prison writings. For, regardless of whether Gramsci actually solved the problems in the manner and to the extent suggested by recent commentaries or only pointed in the general direction of such solutions, his work can be appropriated in various ways to help solve the theoretical and political difficulties involved in the current crisis of Marxism. Thus Gramsci established the foundations for Marxist theoretical work that avoids all forms of reductionism whilst retaining the central perspective of class struggle; and, in seeking to explain the astonishing resilience of the bourgeoisie in the face of crises as well as the disappointing course of the Bolshevik revolution, he also produced a set of theoretical concepts for the analysis of the superstructural moment which have clear strategic implications. In this respect one can single out the essay by Mouffe as an excellent demonstration of the non-reductionist implications of his work and the book by Buci-Glucksmann as a theoretical *tour de force* concerned with the strategic implications of Gramsci's enlargement of the concept of the state. Certainly there is no cause here to bewail the poverty of theory or to abandon the quest for an approach that permits an understanding of the social whole. The theoretical perspective proffered in Gramsci's work also has obvious strategic implications for resolving the political moment of the current crisis in Marxism. A first step in this respect is the improved understanding of the political problems confronting the Left (as evidenced in the analyses of Thatcherism in recent issues of this journal). But this must be accompanied by greater concern with the development of a left Eurocommunist strategy and its successful conduct in a conjuncture that is far from favourable thereto. In this respect the Gramsci debate is still in its infancy and one looks forward to further work on this problem in Britain as well as elsewhere. □

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Discussion

Thatcherism - a new stage?

Stuart Hall

Broadly speaking, I think the analysis of the emergence of the 'radical Right' which I began to sketch in 'The Great Moving Right Show' (*Marxism Today* January 79) has been largely confirmed by subsequent events. That view has since been considerably deepended and extended by other contributors (Martin Jacques in *Marxism Today* October 79; Gamble in *Marxism Today* November 79; Leonard and Corrigan in December 79 *Marxism Today*). We need to take this analysis further, if our political response to the crisis is to be an informed one. Especially, we need a more detailed account of the effects of particular policies in different areas: we need a better and deeper analysis of the 'new economic strategy': we need a sounder and fuller set of alternatives: above all, we need a detailed and sober assessment of how the struggles against and resistances to 'Thatcherism' are developing, their strengths and weaknesses. On either side — theirs and ours — our watchword must be 'Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will'. In the months ahead, we shall require a mobilisation of all the available resources — theoretical, political, tactical. The key to 'Thatcherism' is the global character — the hegemonic thrust — of its intervention. Nothing short of a counter-hegemonic strategy of resistance is capable of matching it on the terrain of struggle which it is day-by-day beginning to map out.

It needs to be said at once that the sense of immediate movement which is given by the first signs of organised resistance to the cuts and the imposition of the new economic strategy may be deceptive. I don't mean to deny for a moment the importance, the absolute necessity, of effectively conducted defensive struggles. Conjuncturally, everything will depend on this sort of effective mobilisation. But we need to remind ourselves, as several contributors correctly noted, that we have seen, in our period, a major counteroffensive, mounted by the working class and other social forces in the period 1972-4, which had the effect immediately of stemming the tide of 'Heathism', but which did not succeed in deflecting the long-term and deep currents and movements towards the right. If the analysis of 'Thathcherism' is correct in broad outlines, one thing is crystal clear: a defensive struggle is no longer enough.

We welcome Discussion contributions on articles appearing in the journal

The nature of Thatcherism

Perhaps it might be worth summarising briefly the points on which all the contributors to the debate so far appear to be agreed. 'Thatcherism' represents something qualitatively new in British politics. Elements of a 'radical Right' programme and offensive were indeed incipient in earlier manifestations — for example, in the 'Powellism' of the 1968-9 period, and in the Heath programme in 1970, as Gamble has reminded us. But the constitution of all those elements into a radical political force, capable of setting new terms to the political struggle, and effectively condensing a wide range of social and political issues and themes under the social market philosophy and banner of the radical Right *is* a qualitatively new political event. We must take account of the *radicalism* of this intervention. It has decisively broken with the politics of stalemate, with the whole repertoire of crisis management adopted by both previous Labour and Tory administrations, and with the very terms of the political and ideological consensus which stabilised the political crisis for so long. It has buried neo-Keynesianism, the cornerstone of the 'modernist' strategy; it has broken up old-style corporatism; it has mounted an effective counter-offensive to social-democratic and liberal-conservative forms of 'statism', both economically and ideologically. It means, not to tinker with this or that mechanism, but to change the terms of the struggle, to shift the balance of class forces irrevocably to the Right. It is the only parliamentary political force resolutely committed to the view that 'things cannot go on in the old way'. It knows that it must de-struct in order fundamentally to re-construct.

Then we must take account of the *global* character of its offensive. It means to pro mulgate not just a new set of policies but a new ethic, to construct a new form of 'commonsense'. It has a model for every feature and aspect of social relationship: it has a 'philosophy' as well as a programme. This hegemonic character to its intervention is something profoundly new, in terms of the radical breaks which it is prepared to make with the whole inherited baggage of assumptions and attitudes. Then we must take account of its effective *penetration* into the very heartland of Labour's support: in the unions, the working class and other social strata. Leonard and Corrigan especially have shown clearly the manner and degree to which 'Thatcherism' has rooted itself in the contradictory experience of the working class under social democratic forms of 'statism' — rooted itself, exploited those contradictions, effectively presented itself as *the* 'popular force' in the 'struggle' of 'the people' against 'the state' — and thereby effectively mobilised a measure of popular support for imposed solutions, for a more authoritarian form of state, within the dominated classes. What is aimed for is a radical and, if possible, permanent shift in the balance of class forces in a 'radical Right' direction. This attempt to colonise and articulate the contradictory experiences and conditions of the dominated classes in the direction of the radical Right *has* met with a measure of popular support. We must not on any account underestimate its success in disorganising the forces of opposition, in breaking up and fragmenting the defensive organisations of the class. Before we take heart at the resistance of the steel workers to the brutal policies of closure and deflation, let us pause a moment to recall the Leyland vote.

Can it succeed?

Can 'Thatcherism' survive? Can it 'succeed'? Or will it disintegrate as a result of its own internal contradictions? There is certainly no guarantee of its success. It is beset by internal contradictions and subject to real limits. It won a measure of electoral support on the basis of a set of opportunist, calculated instrumental promises. It cannot deliver on them all. The promise immediately to put more money in people's pockets turned out to be a simple electoral fraud. The temporary alliance it attempted to forge between its own ideological commitment to monetarism and the opposition in some sections of the working class to another around of social contracting and the drive to return to 'free collective bargaining' is already much dissipated by the effects of the new economic policy, closures and rising unemployment. Appeals to self-reliance and individualism look hollow in the face of massive state and welfare expenditure cuts. This experience of what 'Thatcherism' really means in power will

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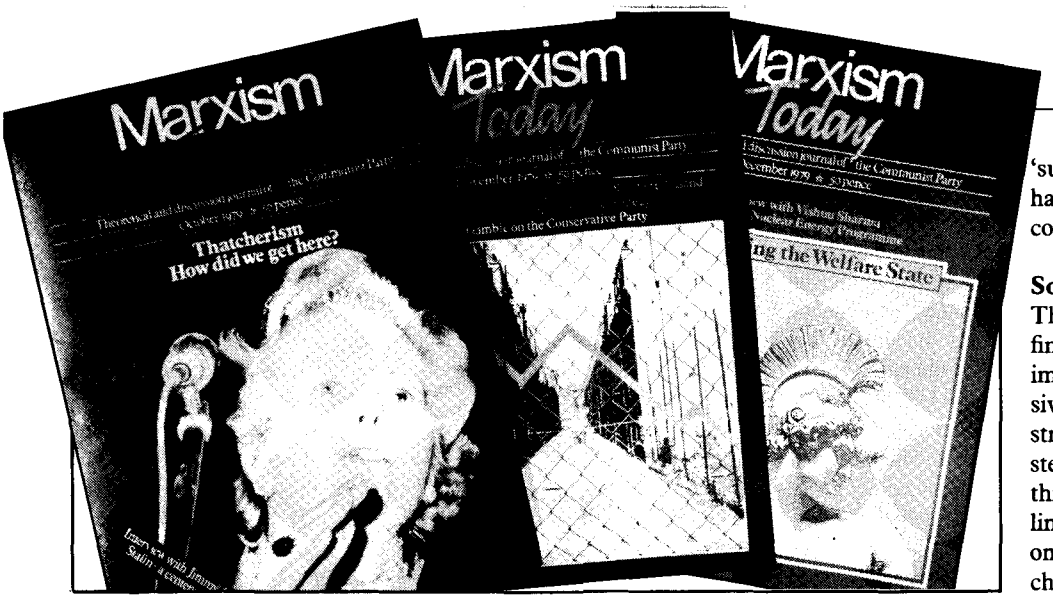

undoubtedly undermine some part of its electoral support and drive into opposition some of those constituencies which it won on the most opportunist basis. Clearly, the Government will face here a major crisis in the 'politics of electoral support'. As to limits: there is little evidence that the new economic policies will have any real effect in turning the economic tide. It is not touching the structural economic problems at home and it is powerless to ward off the savage effects of a global capitalist recession which promises to be deeper and more protracted than at first expected. There is no straight road ahead for the radical Right.

I do not personally take as much immediate comfort from all this as many others do on the Left. I think 'Thatcherism' has been very effective in constructing a 'crisis' frame of mind: in deliberately lowering expectations and in creating an expectation that things will have to get much worse before they get better. Some who followed Mrs Thatcher to the polls for reasons of short-term immediate gain will fall away from her support. But others will hold through thick and thin, because she continues to offer a radical, root-and-branch solution to a situation which borders on the 'unthinkable'. She may come a cropper in the end: but her Government has won power on what I would call a 'long leash'. 'Thatcherism' is riding deep contradictions, in crisis conditions. It is unlikely to be blown off course by an immediate crisis of electoral support. Besides, the degree of ideological commitment is such that I would expect the Government to fall before it executes another of those graceful U-turns. It is also directly relevant to ask what precisely would be gained, in the long term, by a reversal which brought to power either another variant of Heath Toryism or another bout of Mr Callaghan, with the same policies as before. I think there is an illusion around that it might still be possible to go back to the old *status quo*. But I think this underestimates both the depth of the crisis and the degree to which Thatcherism has irrevocably undermined 'the old solutions and positions'. There may be alternatives to 'Thatcherism': but there is no simple 'going back', no return to base 1, in the conditions which now prevail. In those terms, I believe that Martin Jacques is right when he suggests that, one way or another, Thatcherism has broken the long political stalemate and already fundamentally changed the political rules of the game.

Thatcherism and big capital

I think it also matters what we mean by 'success'. 'Thatcherism' could well succeed in its long term mission to shift the balance of class forces to the right, without itself surviving for years in power in the parliamentary sense. Even the old social democratic game of 'social contracts' and deflationary wages policies would be a very different matter from previous years if it were to be conducted on the basis of a series of working class defeats, face to face with unions curtailed by legal limits in their freedom to organise, in a stimulated mood of anti-unionism, in the wake of a set of struggles in which the employed were forced to fight for jobs against the unemployed, skilled against unskilled, men against women, blacks against whites. This would be a working class movement against which serious damage had been inflicted; and in that sense, 'Thatcherism' would have done its political work, even if it could not survive in power. This is too pessimistic a perspective: but it qualifies what we mean by its 'success'. I doubt very much whether big capital has much long-term confidence in the capacity of a brutally simple monetarist doctrine to stem the tide of the recession. What they are looking to Mrs Thatcher to do is to shift the balance of political forces. They have supported her because they see in 'Thatcherism' the only political force capable of altering the relations of forces in a manner favourable to the imposition of capitalist solutions. They have supported her on political and ideological grounds. In that sense, the long-term political mission of the radical Right could 'succeed' even if this particular Government had to give way to one of another electoral complexion.

Socialism and statism

This brings us to the response. Here the Left finds itself in a serious dilemma. The immediate response is bound to be a defensive one: fight the cuts, defend the right to strike, curtail the erosion of civil liberties, stem the tide . . . Necessarily, the Left will throw itself into this sort of struggle. But its limits must surely by now be clear to everyone. 'Thatcherism' has exposed the limited character of a struggle which remains a defensive one. Here, too, we need to draw directly on the lessons of our analysis. The key lies in the arguments put by Leonard and Corrigan. 'Thatcherism' succeeded on the back of a deep and profound disillusionment among ordinary people with the very form of social democratic 'statism' to which previous governments, in their different ways, have been committed. That type of 'statism' implied a very distinct view of the state itself — as a centralised bureaucracy, a neutral beneficiary, which at best did things to and for people, but which was substantively outside their control. It was largely *experienced* in negative and oppressive ways. As a set of real, lived practices, this form of 'statism' implied a particular way in which classes and other social forces were represented politically — at several removes from the actual exercise of power, through the occupancy of parliamentary power, increasingly distant and remote from the real conditions of life. It was based on a particular view of how parties represent and thus form the 'classes' politically. It represented the dominated classes as passive recipients, as clients of a state run by experts and professionals over which people exercised no real or substantive control. This state was increasingly 'lived' as an arbitrary and deeply undemocratic power: increasingly, in whomsoever's keeping it was, it served to *discipline* the classes it claimed to represent. In the development of her anti-statist philosophy, Mrs Thatcher has successfully identified this kind of 'statism' with Labour — and with socialism. It was then possible to represent the resistance to and disenchantment with this form of 'statism' as a resistance, not only to Labour, but more fundamentally to socialism itself. In this way Thatcherism has successfully identified itself with the *popular* struggle against a bureaucratically centralist form of the capitalist state. And the harsh truth is that this was possible because, in many respects, this was and *is* what large sections of the Left do actually mean by 'socialism'. And what 'Thatcherism' irrevocably demonstrates is

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that there is no longer a popular majority for this form of the state.

Democracy — at the heart of the matter.
I think we can draw two immediate lessons from this analysis. First, that the reconstruction of a popular force on the left, capable of articulating the crisis to the Left, is *intrinsically* linked with the struggle to deepen, develop and actively transform the forms of popular democratic struggle. Democracy — in the light of the practical critique of 'statism' which the Thatcherite success misrepresents — is no longer marginal or tangential to the struggle: it is the very heart of the matter. Second, that the defensive struggle will get us nowhere if it is posed simply as a return to the state of things before the deluge. To put it simply, the defensive struggle cannot succeed unless it contains an active and positive content — of a new kind. The formulation of a new conception of socialism, far from being some ideal activity which we can postpone to better times, is the only *practical* way in which the crisis can not simply be stemmed, but actually turned in a positive direction. Without meeting these two pre-requisites, we may win the odd engagement or two in the coming months: but we will lose the war of position.

Two more practical things are required to provide the minimum basis of this kind of 'global' response from the Left. The first is the unification of the working class; the second is the construction of a historical alliance which alone is capable of constituting that 'social force' which could turn the tide of 'Thatcherism'. By 'unification', I mean a particular way of conducting the political struggle. Unification is an active process. It does not mean expressing politically that unity which we suppose to be already there. For no such thing exists. The working class is, indeed, remorselessly divided and fragmented by capital itself, by the action of the state and by the intervention of Thatcherism itself. There is no single class there waiting to take the political stage: just as there is no necessary, inevitable and automatic inclination of such a class 'towards socialism'. If Thatcherism has accomplished anything, it must surely be the ditching of these comfortable and comforting guarantees. We must think instead of how the unity of the class can be actively produced and constructed in the way in which the struggle itself is prosecuted. This means returning to all those worn-out questions about the forms of political organisation, about the basis on which more unified struggles can be developed, and about the deeply undemocratic character of most of the major institutions and organisations of the Left itself. The question of the nature, procedures, organisational structures and conception of new forms of political representation, of a more, broadly mass and democratic character, is on the agenda: not a matter of 'after the immediate struggle is over'. This is what the 'immediate struggle' is about.

Alliances — in practice.
But the unity of the class — even if it could be brought about — could not in and of itself be nearly sufficient. For, as we suggested, the intervention of the radical Right is a global one. It has effectively condensed under its slogans and banners a variety of real antagonisms which do not have an immediate class character; and it seeks to neutralise a whole number of deep social struggles which have a fundamentally democratic character and are deeply defined and over-determined by class relations, but which are not reducible to them. Unless, in the course of the resistance to Thatcherism, we can constitute a pole of *popular* struggle, which increasingly wins over into an effective alliance the constituencies which are the key subjects of these other forms of struggle, the struggle against Thatcherism will lack precisely that popular character capable of challenging the hegemonic offensive which it represents. But the left has little real knowledge of, or indeed much stomach for, the hard politics of constructing, not mere temporary 'associations' of an opportunitic kind, but real and durable historical alliances, or of building up a genuinely popular democratic social force. For such alliances, if they are not mere window dressing, will require the profound *transformation* of all the forces which are pulled together in this way. A sexist labour movement cannot win the deep support of an active and radical feminist movement; racist organisations cannot provide the basis for the construction of a political unity in struggle between black and white workers: feminists who do not see the relevance of the defence of the right to strike to their own struggles cannot enter into an alliance which is more than temporary with the organised working class. It may be that the internal transformations of practice and organisation which alone could gradually construct a political historical *bloc* of this order — which, like 'Thatcherism' is capable of putting on the political agenda, not a return to the *status quo ante bellum*, but *a new form of the state* — are too traumatic; and that the forces which maintain and reproduce these internal divisions and separations are too rigid, deeply entrenched, historically binding to be overcome. In that event, we may indeed succeed in 'defeating' Thatcherism: but the inheritor of that victory would be Mr Callaghan and Mr Healey.

Is there a political force capable of setting aside the *slogan* of the 'broad democratic alliance' and 'popular democratic struggle', and entering — directly in the teeth of the crisis — into the *politics* and the *practice* of this war of positions against the radical Right? Is there, in short, a political force capable of renewing the movement 'towards socialism'? Is there a doctor in the house? □

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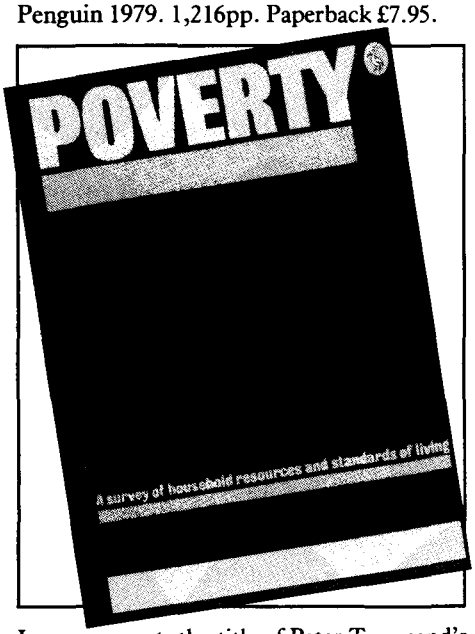
Reviews

POVERTY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM
Peter Townsend
Penguin 1979. 1,216pp. Paperback £7.95.



In one respect, the title of Peter Townsend's Poverty in the United Kingdom is misleading. The book says as much about the rich as about the poor. Indeed, one of the main principles which Professor Townsend asserts in this book is that poverty 'has to be understood not only as an inevitable feature of severe social inequality but also as a particular consequence of actions by the rich to preserve and enhance their wealth and so deny it to others'.

The book has its roots in a major survey of living standards (covering a representative sample of 2000 households) carried out in 1968/69. The end result is no less valuable for having been ten years in the making. As Townsend's analysis, not only of his own survey material but of a wide range of other sources, makes clear, poverty and inequality have shown themselves to be remarkably persistent, changing little this century. The past decade, with its increase in unemployment, in the numbers of pensioners and of single parent families, has probably brought with it a still greater incidence of poverty; the next decade is likely to see inequalities enhanced further still.

Townsend's survey material is particularly valuable as an alternative to official data, which is often inadequate and, on issues as contentious as poverty or inequality, tends to present an unduly 'optimistic' view of the world consistent with prevailing governmental values. Throughout the text, which stretches to over 1200 pages (including appendices and references), Townsend reviews a wide range of material — official and unofficial — while also reporting the results of his own survey. For those wishing to equip themselves with the facts of economic and social inequality in Britain, this will be an invaluable reference. Those who have the stamina to read the volume from cover to cover (an exhausting but rewarding exercise) will find the task rendered less arduous by Townsend's literary style.

Official data seriously understate the true dimensions of economic inequality. Using the state definition of poverty (the basic supplementary benefit level) Townsend's survey found that there were about 3.3 million people (in 1.3 million households) in poverty in 1968/69. These represented six to seven per cent of the population. If a slightly more 'generous' definition is taken (adding 40 per cent to the basic rates), the official standard suggested almost 12 million people (in 4.5 million households) in poverty or on its margins. Even on this stringent definition, therefore, the 'poor' accounted for between a quarter and a third of the total UK population. More-over, this is only a 'snapshot' of the problem at one point in time and Townsend concludes that, even on the State's definition, more than half the population experience poverty, or near poverty, for at least part of their lives.

He argues, however, that poverty can only realistically be viewed in relation to incomes as a whole, defining the 'poor' as those with less than (say) half the average income of households of their type. On this definition (the 'relative income standard'), the numbers of poor increased to about a tenth of the total population (five million people), while almost 30 per cent of the population lived on the margins of poverty (having an income less than 80 per cent of the relevant average). But this too is an inadequate way of measuring poverty. The poor cannot live by bread alone: 'poverty can be defined objectively and applied consistently only in terms of the concept of relative deprivation'.

This 'objective measure' draws a line below which people are unable to participate fully in the society to which they belong. To try and identify such a divsion, Townsend and his research team examined a wide range of social indicators, including diet, clothing, housing and home amenities, recreation, education, health and social relations. Most of these indicators seemed to suggest that an appropriate definition of poverty, manifest in a range of deprivations, might be drawn at about two-thirds the average income or 50 per cent above the Supplementary Benefit level. Taking this as their definition, the researchers found that 12½ million people, representing a quarter of the population, could be said to be in poverty.

Townsend highlights the fact that almost half those who found themselves in poverty on this definition were in households in which someone was employed, and he goes on to remark that a situation in which a majority of those living in poverty or on its margins have earnings as their main source of income is likely to be regarded 'with some discomfiture in any society setting considerable store by the work ethic and self-help'. Class differences play an important role in Townsend's analysis: 54 per cent of the unskilled manual workers in his sample were found to be 'relatively deprived' — proportionately eleven times as many as in the professional classes.

One of the major reasons for the understatement of inequality in official (and most independent) studies is the concentration on cash incomes. Townsend warns that this approach is too restrictive. Living standards depend on a number of different types of resources distributed through various systems. In particular, he argues, the traditional distinction between income and wealth — encouraged by official data sources — is highly artificial. By combining the two into a single measure, his study shows that the degree of inequality is increased dramatically. The same is true if one takes account of fringe benefits (which have increased substantially in the years since the survey was conducted). The rich even gained more, in *cash* terms, from expenditure on social services in kind (including education and the health service).

It appears that a number of systems of resource distribution, both private and public, reflect and reinforce the underlying inequalities. How is this to be explained? Townsend reviews some of the major theories of poverty (through few of them approach the problem as one of inequality). He rejects the idea, popular in America in recent years, that the poor are trapped into their own 'subculture' of poverty. Such explanations are essentially a resurrection of the Victorian concept of the 'undeserving poor', comforting to a society 'which feels guilty about its inequalities but does not quite want to forsake them'. But there is little valid evidence to support the hypothesis. Nor is Townsend impressed by the British version of such an approach, the 'Cycle of Deprivation' thesis, so popular with Sir Keith Joseph. Again the theory is convenient as a means of legitimising inequality and attribut-

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ing responsibility for poverty to individuals or families rather than to structural causes.

Turning to the economists, Townsend finds little satisfactory explanation for the persistence of inequalities in the orthodox (neo-classical) approach which relates earnings to productivity or innate abilities. Again, the effect (and perhaps the purpose) has been to legitimise inequality rather than to explain it. Governments have accepted that all they can do is to educate or train 'the poor' out of their poverty. The focal point again is poverty, rather than the inequality of which it is a part. It is indeed remarkable that such explanations have persisted against the weight of evidence and, in Townsend's view, 'the failure to explain differences in earnings between the sexes is a major deficiency of the orthodox approach'. Moreover, the approach relies heavily on the assumption of perfect markets.

In an attempt to adapt their theories some neo-classical economists have developed the concept of 'dual labour markets'. Workers could be separated into those in 'good jobs' and those in 'bad jobs'. The first enjoyed favourable pay and conditions, training and job security, all characteristics of which those in the 'secondary' labour market were deprived. Townsend is critical of this approach too, arguing that it is 'not properly related to the history of segmentation and the long-standing occupational class divisions of the labour market'. But some economists have gone further, to develop a radical theory of 'labour market segmentation' which takes account of class factors and employers' interests in promoting divisions within the labour force. While such an approach is promising, in Townsend's view, it says too little about the status of minorities outside the labour force. (He is not satisfied with the explanation that the status of such groups is determined by their *past* association with the labour market). At the same time, he argues, there is a need to widen the analysis to consider not just earnings but the distribution of other resources as well; to examine the position of households (instead of just income recipients); and to 'analyse the contemporary class structure' in some depth. One of the central messages of the book is that the mechanisms for resource distribution are diverse but that there is a major division between classes in the receipt of those resources. Moreover 'the unequal distribution of resources confers power to control the further allocation of resources'.

A distinctive feature of Townsend's approach is his emphasis on the importance of 'minority groups' (in which he includes single parent families, immigrants, the disabled, the low paid and the unemployed). These low status social groups, he argues, have certain specific characteristics which give them an existence independent of social class yet directly and indirectly support that class system. 'Societies recognise and, indeed, promote minority groups and . . . such groups exist within and help to explain a structure of inequality'. Townsend labels his approach one of 'class structuration'.

Because of this emphasis on minority groups, the book includes a number of chapters analysing separately the conditions affecting each. Each chapter draws not only on the author's own survey material (from which statistical data and case studies are extracted) but on other available studies. Some may disagree with Townsend's analysis of the role of minorities as independent of (but reinforcing) the class structure and largely independent of the labour market. But each of these chapters will remain a valuable source of information on specific groups for some time to come.

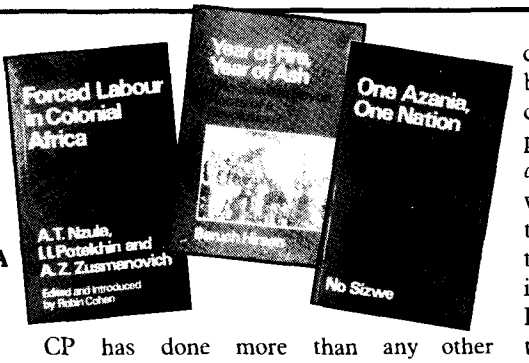
Peter Townsend's exhaustive catalogue of economic and social inequalities support strongly his emphasis on the structural nature of poverty. His final policy proposals — which include the abolition of excessive wealth and income and unemployment — therefore seems disjointed from the main body of analysis. But Townsend is aware that such changes are unlikely to come about in the near future against a background 'the elaborate hierarchy of wealth and esteem, of which poverty is an integral part'.

Chris Pond

FORCED LABOUR IN COLONIAL AFRICA
A T Nzula, I I Potekhin and A Z Zusmanovich
edited and introduced by Robin Cohen

YEAR OF FIRE, YEAR OF ASH: THE SOWETO REVOLT, ROOTS OF A REVOLUTION?
Baruch Hirson

ONE AZANIA, ONE NATION: THE NATIONAL QUESTION IN SOUTH AFRICA
No Sizwe
All published by Zed Press, London. Paperbacks £2.95, £3.95 and £2.95 respectively.


Forced Labour in Colonial Africa
A.T. Nzula, I.I.Potekhin and A.Z. Zusmanovich
Edited and introduced by Robin Cohen
Year of Fire, Year of Ash
Baruch Hirson
One Azania, One Nation
No Sizwe

Despite the apparent separateness of their themes, there are common factors binding these books together. In one way or another they are all concerned with the struggle for national liberation and raising the level of political consciousness among the masses in South Africa. All three manifest a bias against the South African Communist Party, its strategy and tactics, despite the fact that the CP has done more than any other organisation in South Africa to rouse political consciousness and link theory and practice through the application of the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

In the case of the first book, the bias emanates from the editor, not the three writers themselves, who were all active in the Comintern at the time they collaborated on this work, first published in Russian in Moscow in 1933. Nzula himself was the first African general secretary of the Communist Party in South Africa. He went to the Soviet Union in 1931 to study at the Lenin School and died in Moscow in 1933.

Cohen says he chose to retitle the book because its original title *The Working Class Movement and Forced Labour in Negro Africa* did not accurately reflect the contents. 'The book represents a generalised and trenchant critique of colonialism, where this was possible, from the point of view of workers *and* peasants themselves. The stress on the working class movement in the original title therefore seemed misplaced'. Leaving aside the question when peasants became workers, it should be noted that the Soviet Africanist Professor A B Davidson has translated the title *Forced Labour and the Trade Union Movement in Negro Africa*, and since the book deals not only with colonial oppression but also with trade unions and peasant movements, the difference in translation emphasis is not without significance.

Cohen adds: 'It was necessary to take certain liberties with, and make some additions to, the original text . . . . . While every effort has been made to preserve the spirit and style of the original work . . . . . the reader should bear in mind that the text printed here is not always a word for word translation from the original'. Some of the alterations are minor, some more extensive. Those unable to check with the original Russian may be left uncertain whether they are reading precisely what the authors

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intended. In addition, the anti-Soviet and anti-Communist Party bias of the editor and translator Hugh Jenkins (who is credited by Cohen with joint responsibility for the notes) makes it inevitable that the work is not presented in the same spirit as the original. In particular Cohen's discussion of theories about the alleged murder of Nzula by Comintern agents, which he justifies on the grounds that it would be unscholarly to ignore them, is based entirely on hearsay and rumours emanating from anti-Soviet sources without a single fact to back them up. Cohen attempts to get round this obstacle by making accusations in the form of questions. 'Had Nzula begun to question some of the orthodoxies established by Comintern decisions?', he asks. Well, had he? Nobody has said so. Nzula in fact was doing everything the Comintern could have wanted and was one of its most effective propagandists. The circumstances of his death are fully documented at the hospital in which he died in Moscow and are known to Soviet scholars. Why did not Cohen consult the record before continuing to circulate baseless rumours? For Cohen to suck questions out of his thumb and then provide no answers is hardly acceptable to scholarship even in bourgeois circles.

It is a pity the book is blemished in this way. It was Communist scholars who were the first to study the working class movement in Africa, and this book was a pioneer in its field. Though much of the material is inevitably dated, and some chapters are of uneven quality, it is an invaluable contribution to Marxist historiography, and shows that Soviet concern with the African working class movement preceded by decades that of bourgeois scholars, most of whom only became bothered by it after the shakeup of the Second World War had roused the fear that Africa might indeed be ripe for revolution.

One of the points stressed most strongly by Nzula and his comrades, writing in the 1930s, was the growth of political and class consciousness amongst the masses engaged in the struggle against imperialist oppression in Africa. Nowhere has this consciousness spread more widely and been maintained more consistently than in South Africa, the most economically developed country in Africa. The African National Congress, one of the oldest liberation movements on the continent, was born in 1912, and the Communist Party in 1921, and though the CP was outlawed in 1950 and the ANC in 1960, their work of politicisation, organisation and mobilisation in action has continued without interruption in the face of the ever-intensifying repression of the regime. In his book *Year of Fire, Year of Ash*, Baruch Hirson testifies to the ever-present influence of the ANC in the 1976 Soweto uprising, though he does not by any means hold the organisation exclusively responsible for the revolutionary upsurge of the recent period, documenting in great detail the contribution of other organisations and tendencies, however evanescent.

Hirson also throws considerable light on the relationship between the students and the workers in the June 1976 uprising, as well as in the period before and after. The students quickly realised that they did not by themselves have the power to defeat the forces of the state, and their early calls on the workers for support met with a widespread response. The failure to cement this alliance on a secure foundation he ascribes to lack of organisation and deficiencies in consciousness on the part of both workers and students, 'showing in fact the gulf between themselves (the students) and the men on the factory floor'. Perhaps Hirson does not give sufficient weight to the objective factors, such as the power of the state and the viciousness of police and bosses, which restrict the extent to which political consciousness can be translated into effective action. Most astonishing is his contention that 'in all its outpourings, the Black Consciousness Movement was apolitical'.

Apolitical? Unideological, perhaps, lacking perspective or direction. But one can hardly apply the term apolitical to a movement which, whatever its theoretical shortcomings, has done so much to rouse the consciousness of the African people and move them to action. Many of the exponents of black consciousness have, in fact, since joined the ANC. Hirson spends a great deal of time and space discussing, not unfruitfully, this problem of rousing revolutionary consciousness. The fact that never once in his painstakingly researched book does he find time to discuss the contribution in this sphere of the South African Communist Party can only be described as a deficiency of consciousness on his own part. He is not unaware of its importance; he has simply chosen, for reasons best known to himself, to ignore it.

In his book *One Azania, One Nation*, the scholar who writes under the pseudonym No Sizwe demonstrates both an impressive range of research and an equally impressive range of confusion. While conceding that national oppression exists in South Africa, and that a struggle for national liberation is in progress, he denies the existence of nations or national groups.

'The "races" of South Africa are not "national groups" precisely because they are not nations and because they do not desire separate statehood . . . . It is my central thesis that the officially classified population registration groups in South Africa are colour castes . . . . .' Referring to similar groups in America, he says: 'Because they are denied full cultural, political and economic opportunities within the polity, they are compelled to act together politically. In the process, not unnaturally, they put forward demands which are similar to those of oppressed nationalities, with the significant exception that they neither wish to secede from the nation nor desire cultural autonomy or segregation'.

To continue to talk of nations, national groups, national minorities or races, he maintains, is to play the game of the ruling class, to divide the people, to open the road to Bantustans, and into this category of splitters he puts Soviet scholars like Potekhin, the South African Communist Party, the ANC because they take cognisance of national categories, try to analyse their significance and work out a strategy for effective political action based on the realities of life rather than theoretical fantasies. The fact that No Sizwe refers to 'Africans', 'Coloureds' and 'Indians' in quotation marks and calls them colour-castes instead of something else has not enabled him to formulate either a national theory or a programme of action more effective than that of the existing liberation movement headed by the ANC of which the Communist Party is an important component.

At the end of his book, after demolishing all rival theories (including those of Stalin and Trotsky, though Lenin does not rate a mention), No Sizwe is still compelled to admit that what we witness in South Africa is 'a struggle for full and equal nationhood', though he is still unable to define a nation. The following piece of obfuscation is the best he can manage:

'The working people have resolved in the field of action to create a new South Africa in which the barriers of caste no longer rise up to tower over the nation and imprison its members in separate cells (whereby the capitalist gaolers of the country can the more easily control them). The working class, in short, has become the leading class in the nation and is about to constitute itself as the nation of South Africa'.

Which begs all the questions he is supposed to have answered. By this stage, however, it is too late for No Sizwe to come forward with new definitions. He has shot his bolt and revealed that all his agonising is due to the fact that he does not understand the relationship between class and national struggle in the South African context. His theories, while interesting as semantic exercises, have no practical outlet and are therefore valueless to the liberation movement.

Brian Bunting

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NOTES

History Workshop Conference

Judy Bloomfield writes: In the outwardly inappropriate surroundings of a derelict church, over 600 socialist historians, both lay and professional, gathered for the plenary session of the Ruskin History Workshop — on E P Thompson's latest book *The Poverty of Theory*. The themes of the debate derived from Thompson's attack on French Communist philosopher, Louis Althusser (him again!) and his English followers, and his trenchant defence both of socialist humanism and English materialist historiography.

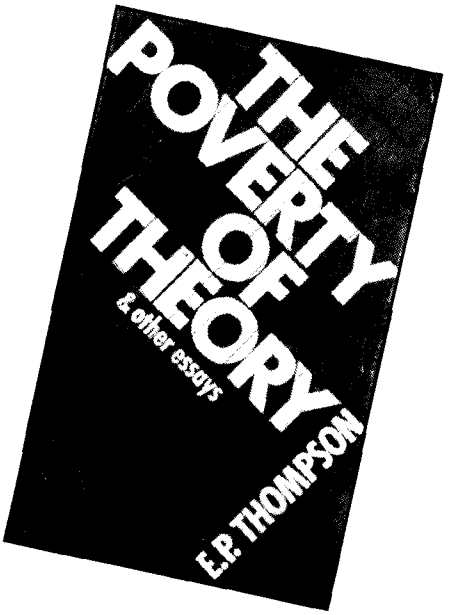
Stuart Hall opened the debate with his own criticisms of 'Althusserianism'

(1) Its confusion between empiricism and the empirical — the difference between assuming facts to be independent, objective and self-explanatory and the investigation of the concrete (through case studies or historical moments) which may then be subjected to more abstract analysis.

(2) The confusion of theory with practice by the semantic device of labelling theory 'theoretical practice', rather than recognising the necessity of theory *and* its living link with political practice.

(3) The over-emphasis on the determining power of structures, rather than class struggle, in historical change. This so-called 'structural causality' deprives the working class and the people of the power to intervene effectively in history, to challenge the system.

His major criticisms however were reserved for Thompson. The first problem he raised was the limitation of the 'polemical mode' - ie, caricaturing an argument to discredit it or conflating it with a political position which evokes a hostile response (eg, Stalinist). Further question marks were posed over Thompson's concept of experience — its relationship to real relations and analytical categories (eg, economy, class structure) and over the relationship between theory and practice — whether there was a simple relationship of proof of the one in the other. Finally, Stuart Hall argued against a notion of the 'people' or 'people's history' as preexistent, rather than 'the people' as a political identity (and popular unity for socialism) having to be constructed in struggle, through political alliances and the cohesion of diverse progressive ideological traditions.



Richard Johnson, from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, argued against 'theoretical absolutism' — the false polarisation of positions which shared a great deal and the hostile tone of debate. His main disagreement with Thompson centred on a 'culturalist' bias in Thompson's work, the focus on the culture of adversity, the forms of resistance as an expression of some 'essential' humanity rather than on the totality of relations and structures of exploitation and oppression and the culture of resistance (in both its strengths and limitations).

Thompson's reply began with a self-styled 'series of refusals'. The label of culturalism pinned on him by Richard Johnson was rejected — and he pointed to his own criticism of Raymond Williams' early work for neglecting the interaction of culture with institutions and structures. He asserted that the prime motivation for the new interest in the late 1950s and 1960s in culture, class and experience was a political one and decried Johnson's lack of awareness of the political context both then, and now in his attack on Althusserianism as a new form of Stalinism, involving political expulsions (from the PCF) and attacks on libertarian Marxism. He refuted criticisms of his vitriolic manner by attributing academic timidity and politeness to his critics, while claiming his legitimacy from the cut and thrust of political battle. The audience was left to draw its own conclusions as to which political tradition justified political abuse of one's opponents within the movement.

Finally, Thompson accepted the use of the concept of structure for exploratory purposes and of theory as a complement to historical work but rejected both as self-contained systems (as does Althusser). He defined determination as setting limits to, or putting pressure on — and proposed experience as a 'junction concept' between 'social being' and 'social consciousness'. Experience (1) which was the result of social being was lived experience (assumed to be non-ideological) and experience (2) was perceived experience in the sphere of social consciousness. As Stuart Hall pointed out in his final reply using the term experience to cover both concepts was not only confusing but evaded the central problem of the passage from one to the other, from class-in-itself to class-for-itself, from the lived acceptance of the existing order to its socialist transformation.

It would be easy to dismiss the debate because of Thompson's demonology, and the theological pretensions of its setting and style. But the issues behind the showmanship are both serious and relevant to the making of socialism and the retrieval of a past. They deserve the attention of the whole socialist and popular movement and in a manner which allows for full participation.

EURORED II

Delay in the publication of *Eurored II* gave rise to reports of the journal's demise. These reports were exaggerated. *Eurored* has now been around for over 3 years, first appearing at a time of growing interest in and study of West European developments. It was also, but coincidentally, the time when the term Eurocommunism started to be current. Likewise, the Left seemed on the eve of advances that would transform the political balances in some important countries: the Union of the Left in France between the Communists (PCF), the revamped Socialists led by Francois Mitterand, and the Left Radicals; the big gains made by the Italian Communists and the prospect of Communist participation in Government (to say nothing of the reaction of conservatives of various types to this prospect); developments in Spain after the end of Franco; Portugal and the 1974 revolution.

Eurored has tried to reflect these developments, by publishing in the main the views of Communist Parties in Western Europe, or leading members of those parties — to let the Parties speak for themselves as it were. Thus we printed the important statement of the Belgian Party on internationalism (No 6). On the controversial subject of the EEC, it is probably only in *Eurored* (Nos 8, 9, and 10) that you could find the Communist Parties concerned 'speaking for themselves'.

And so to No 11 (price 50p) the implicit theme of which would seem to be, once again, attitudes to Socialist Parties: the Communist Parties featured are from Portugal, West Germany, France and Sweden.

The Editorial Board is currently taking stock of *Eurored* both in relation to content and circulation and finance. Views of readers would be much appreciated and should be sent (as should donations and requests for back issues) to *Eurored*, c/o 16 King Street, London WC2.

Contributions to *Notes* (brief please) are welcome. We need copy before the 1st of the month preceding publication.

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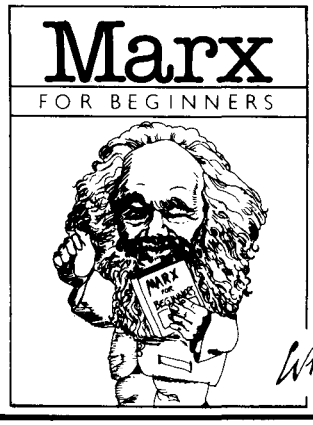

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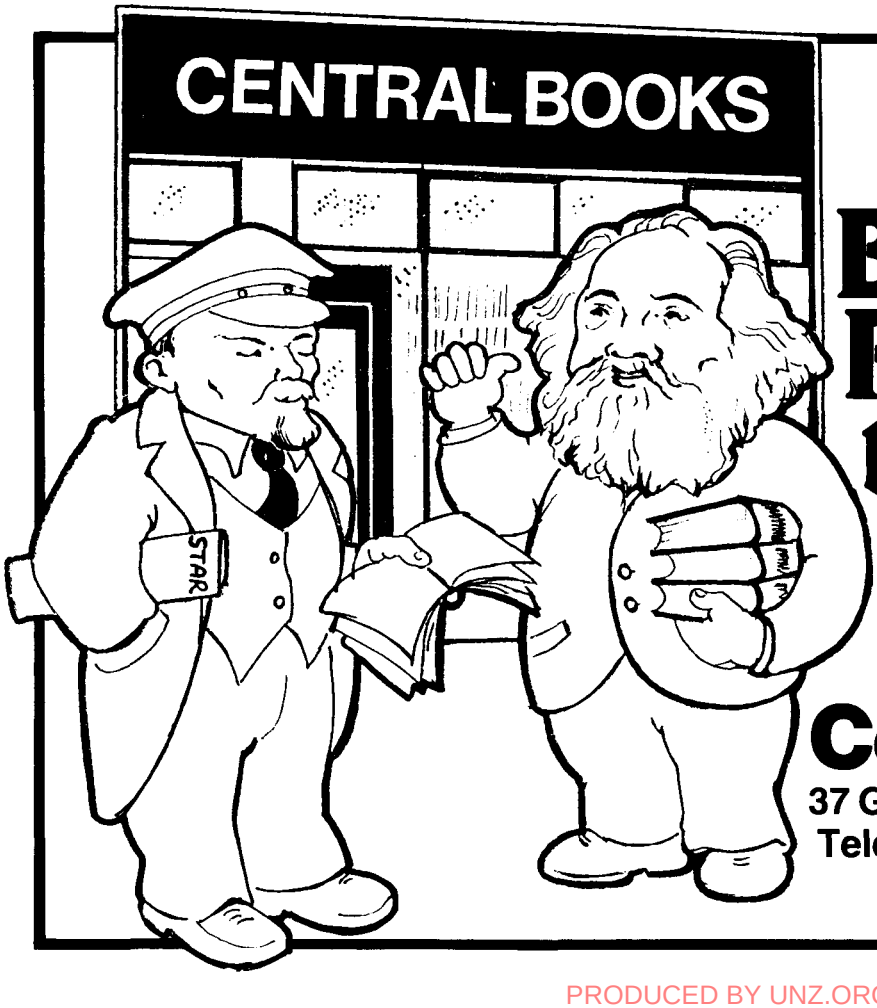

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